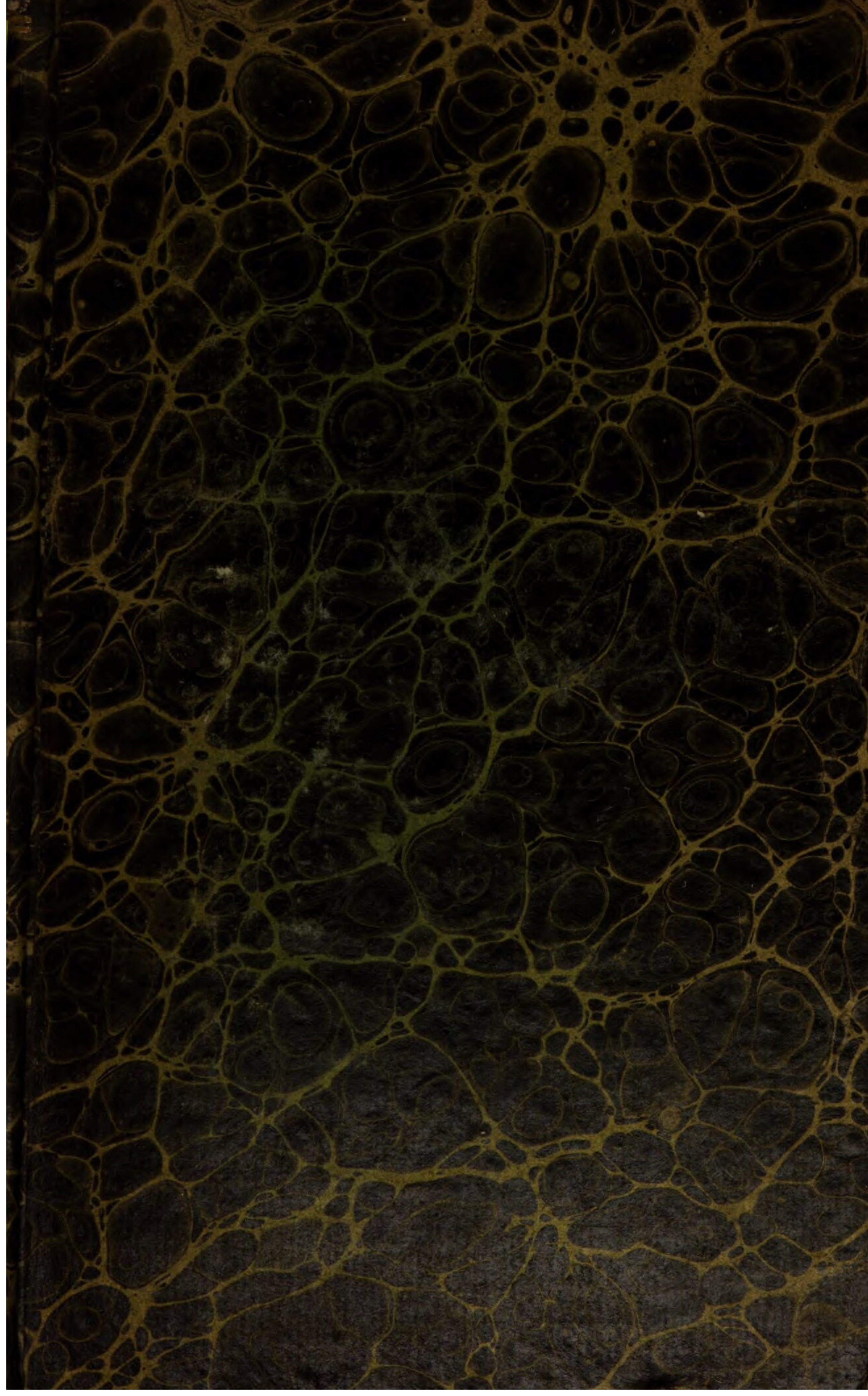




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THE SCRIPTURES;

WITH

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS,

PARTICULARLY CALCULATED

TO FACILITATE THE STUDY

OF THE

HOLY SCRIPTURES

IN

SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES.

SIXTH EDITION.

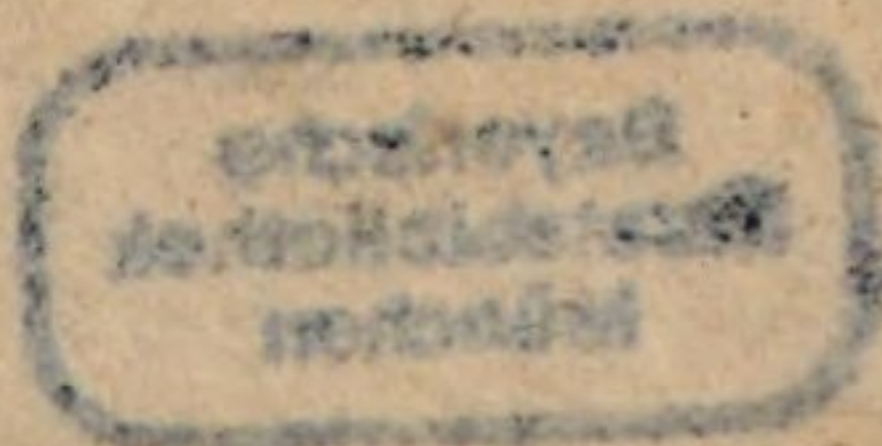
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BY MRS. TRIMMER.

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AND

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SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

BY MRS. J. TRIMMER

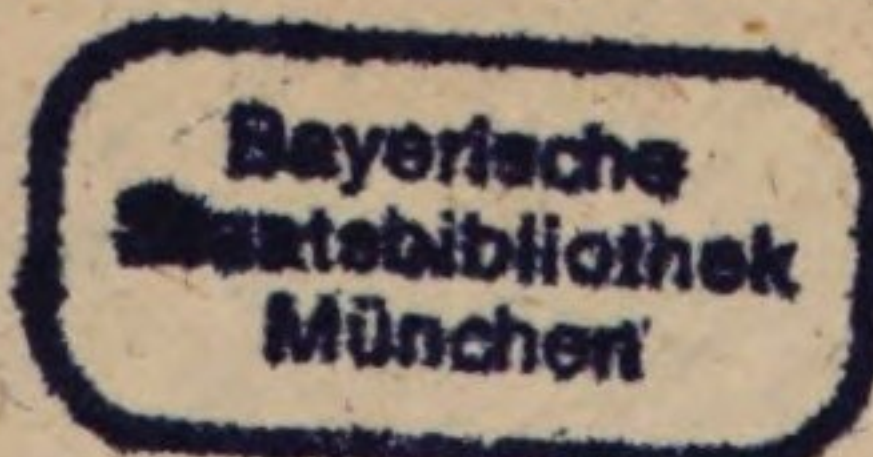
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SECTION I.

THE ISRAELITES WORSHIP THE GOLDEN CALF.

From Exodus, Chap. xxxii. and xxxiii.

AND when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.

And all the people brake off the golden ear-rings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To-morrow is a feast to the LORD.

And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down: for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.

They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed there.

unro, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people.

Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swearest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of, will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.

And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

And Moses turned, and went down from the mount: and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written.

And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

And when Joshua heard the noise of the people, as they shouted, he said unto Moses, there is a noise of war in the camp.

And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being

being overcome : but the noise of them that sing, do I hear.

And it came to pass as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing : and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.

And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them ?

And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot : thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief.

For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us : for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off ; so they gave it me ; then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

And when Moses saw that the people were naked (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame amongst their enemies).

Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD's side ? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.

And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses : and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to-day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother ; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.

And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin : and now I will go up unto the LORD ; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.

And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

Yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin : and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.

Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee : behold, mine angel shall go before thee : nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them.

And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swear unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, unto thy seed will I give it :

And I will send an angel before thee : and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite :

Unto a land flowing with milk and honey : for I will not go up in the midst of thee ; for thou art a stiff-necked people ; lest I consume thee in the way.

ANNOTATIONS

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It seems the Israelites were impatient to pursue their journey : and, perhaps, supposed that Moses had perished in the devouring fire that appeared on the top of the mountain ; and that the cloudy pillar would no longer guide them towards Canaan, so they resolved to have some visible representation of GOD, according to the practice of the heathens among whom they had lived, who made images of gods which had no existence but in the imaginations of their worshippers. The idol which Aaron made, from its being called a calf, is supposed to have been in imitation of the god Apis, a bull, which was worshipped by the Egyptians, and which they used to conduct in great triumph to Memphis, their capital city.

The setting up of this idol was a very heinous crime ; especially as the LORD GOD had made it a part of His Covenant with them, that they should not make to themselves *graven images*, or set up any thing in competition with Himself, the only DIVINE IMAGE, who is *very GOD of very GOD*.

The people had justly incurred the displeasure of GOD ; but the SUPREME BEING is not like mankind, subject to a variety of conflicting passions, which agitate the mind, and sometimes rise to such a height as to produce revenge, hatred, and malice : GOD is at all times the same : therefore when we read here, that GOD *was angry*, and *that His wrath waxed hot*—and that *the LORD repented of the evil*, &c. we are to understand, that the wickedness of men deserved that His justice should punish them with severity ; that His *mercy* abated the rigour of the sentence.

The LORD had already determined what he would do, in respect to his rebellious people, namely, to accept

of the intercession of their mediator, and save them, as a nation, for his sake; but that Moses might have an opportunity of shewing the regard which he had for the honour of God, and the extent of his love for the Israelites, the LORD did not make known this purpose to him, but put him to the proof, that he might shew himself to be a faithful Mediator.

The first intercession which Moses made, shewed, that the honour of the LORD was his principal object. The arguments he used were such as would justify God in sparing the people; and God acted by the Israelites in conformity to these arguments, sparing that nation, for *His oath's sake*, which had forfeited the privileges He had granted them.

No wonder that Moses was provoked to so great a degree, when he found the Israelites in the very act of rebellion against their Heavenly King; or that he should break the Tables of the Testimony, when they had broken the covenant. The honour of God was concerned that he should do so; for they were unworthy of being his people when they had rejected him as their God.

From the excuse that Aaron made for himself, he seems to have been influenced by fear of the people; while those, who required him to make a god for them, acted from a rebellious presumptuous spirit: as his was a sin of *infirmity*, he met with mercy; but it was the will of the LORD that the *presumptuous sinner* should be cut off*.

It is said, that *Aaron had made the people naked to their enemies*; the meaning of this expression is, that having forfeited the protection, which God had promised to them while they adhered to Him, they were now in a defenceless state.

* Numbers xv. 27, &c.

The Levites were required to testify their zeal for the honour of THE LORD, by slaying every man his brother, his companion and neighbour, if they found any such among the worshippers of the golden calf: but it does not appear, that they had occasion to put to death any of their relations; for the whole tribe of Levi were faithful to the LORD; on which account they were consecrated to Him, or set apart from the other tribes to be employed in the holy offices of Religion.

When the idolaters were dead, Moses, most likely, was directed by a Divine impulse to endeavour to make an *atonement* for the rest, who perhaps had joined in the offence through ignorance, fear, inconsideration, &c. which, though very sinful, did not exclude them from the *forgiveness* of God. Every act of wickedness, strictly speaking, is a *sin against God*: but those offences, which have a direct tendency to dishonour His Holy Name, are called emphatically *sins against God*.

It is evident, that Moses greatly regretted the necessity he had been under, of commanding the Levites to cut off the presumptuous sinners; and that he wished to preserve the *nation*, even at the expence of his own life. The expression, *Blot me out of thy book, &c.* signifies, *Let me die, rather than see them cast out from thy favour, and exterminated from the earth.*

The intercession having been made, God assured Moses, that the Israelites should be saved: He gave them to *him*, and promised that he would, for his sake, and for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, preserve them, and put them into possession of the land of Canaan.

The ANGEL, who is here promised, we may suppose was one of those celestial beings who execute the divine

will in a manner incomprehensible to us in our present state ; probably one of those who conducted Lot and his family out of Sodom.

According to the rules of Divine justice, God could not, without destroying them, go up in the midst of a people, who had so heinously offended Him, as they had not yet as a *nation* humbled themselves, and obtained His pardon : but we shall find that, when they did this, He suffered the intercession of Moses to prevail, and then went up in the midst of them.

We learn from this section, that the Mediator of a Covenant betwixt God and his people may intercede and make atonement for the sins committed against that covenant ; and that God, for his sake, spares those for whom the mediator pleads, provided they repent, and testify their repentance in the LORD's appointed way.

It is shocking to read of the Israelites falling into idolatry so soon after the LORD had graciously ratified his Covenant with them : but it shews the weakness of human nature. Christians, under a better Covenant than that of the Israelites, are but too apt to dishonour the LORD God, not indeed by setting up images of silver and gold, but by various other transgressions equally offensive.

As the LORD accepted the Mediator of the *Temporal Covenant*, and remitted the punishment of *temporal death*, which the Jews as a body of people had incurred by apostacy, we may be certain, that the intercession of the Mediator of the *Everlasting Covenant* has prevailed, so as to redeem those for whom he interceded ; our blessed Saviour has prevailed, and that he has redeemed all mankind from *everlasting death* ; but if individuals will not fulfil the conditions required on their part, they will forfeit this redemption, and all the blessings and privileges of the *Covenant of Grace*.

SECTION II.

MOSES DESIRES TO BEHOLD THE GLORY OF GOD—
THE NAME OF THE LORD PROCLAIMED—A COVE-
NANT MADE.

From Exodus, Chap. xxxiii. and xxxiv.

AND when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned : and no man did put on him his ornaments.

For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiff-necked people : I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee : therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.

And the children of Israel stript themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb.

And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the Congregation.

And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, that all the people rose up, and stood every man at his tent-door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle.

And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses.

And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle-door ; and all the people rose up and worshipped every man in his tent-door.

And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp : but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle :

And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people : and thou hast not let me

know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight.

Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight : and consider that this nation is thy people.

And God said, My Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.

And Moses said unto him, If thy Presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.

For wherein shall it be known here, that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.

And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken : for thou hast found grace in my sight ; and I know thee by name.

And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.

And God said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee, and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

And he said, Thou canst not see my face : for there shall no man see me, and live.

And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock :

And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock ; and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by.

And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts : but my face shall not be seen.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables
of

of stone, like unto the first : and I will write upon these tables, the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest.

And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount.

And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount : neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount.

And Moses hewed two tables of stone like unto the first : and he rose up early in the morning, and went up into mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone.

And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, the LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth ; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.

And he said, if now I have found grace in thy sight, O LORD, let my LORD, I pray thee, go amongst us ; (for it is a stiff necked people :) and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.

And he said, Behold, I make a covenant : before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation : and all the people amongst which thou art, shall see the work of the LORD, for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee.

Observe thou that which I command thee this day :

behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

Take heed to thyself lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee.

But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves.

For thou shalt worship no other God : for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words ; for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.

And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights : he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And God wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

And it came to pass when Moses came down from mount Sinai (with the two tables of testimony in Moses's hand, when he came down from the mount) that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone, While God talked with him.

And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone ; and they were afraid to come nigh him.

And Moses called unto them ; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him : and Moses talked with them.

And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh : and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai.

And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face.

But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he

he came out and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded.

And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses that the skin of Moses' face shone : and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

And it came to pass that every one who sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation that was without the camp.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

THE LORD (as we read in the last section) graciously accepted the intercession of Moses for the Israelitish nation, but in respect to *individuals*, their being *saved* or *blotted out* still depended upon the will of the LORD, who alone had the power of discriminating fit objects of his *justice* or his *mercy*.

No greater misfortune could befall the Israelites, than that of GOD's withdrawing his Presence from them. It was very proper that they should be made sensible of the danger to which their rebellion had exposed them ; and that, before they received pardon, each person should humble himself in the sight of the Great Being, whom they had offended.

It seems that though the Tabernacle in which the Law was to be deposited was not yet made, there was a temporary one, to which they resorted for public worship ; this they had now no right to enter, as they were no longer GOD's people, but consigned to Moses.

To signify that the PRESENCE of the LORD would not abide in the midst of them, Moses removed this tabernacle to a distance from the camp, while the people, not daring to approach, remained at their tent doors. Joshua alone entered the tabernacle ; he had not been
a partaker

a partaker of the people's sin. With Moses, as the *mediator*, the LORD condescended to hold a conference. The words which GOD spake upon this occasion are not recorded; but we may judge of their import, by the reply which Moses made. It seems that Moses was in a state of great perplexity; the LORD had given him assurances of his favor to himself, and had commanded him to conduct the people towards Canaan; but having declared, that *whosoever had sinned against Him, He would blot out of his book*, Moses did not understand whether *all* the people were to go, or whether some were first to be cut off by Divine vengeance: he therefore wished to have the way of the LORD made plain to him, that he might know how to please Him. To calm his apprehensions, the LORD assured him that his Presence should go with him, &c. The expression, *I know thee by name*, signifies, that the LORD admitted him to an extraordinary degree of familiarity with Him. Moses's wish to see the glory of the LORD seems to have included a desire to understand the Divine nature, and to know the LORD as *He is*. In this particular, Moses aspired to a degree of knowledge above the reach of his faculties; but as he was actuated, not by curiosity, but by a sincere desire of paying due honour to Him, the LORD was not displeased, but promised to make such a display of his perfections, as should convince Moses that He is of a kind and beneficent nature; and lest Moses should suppose that he had a *right* to the information he requested, the LORD taught him to consider the revelation He was going to make as an act of His free grace and favour.

Whether Moses went into a clift of the rock, or was contented with a milder display of the glory of the LORD, is not related, but he was certainly convinced, that it was GOD himself that talked with him; and we
may

may understand, that the beauty, splendour, and magnificence, with which the LORD GOD makes His presence visible, in Heaven, to superior beings, is such as human nature, with its present infirmities, cannot behold and live.

By the Face of GOD, I think we may understand, the DIVINE IMAGE in the resplendency of Heavenly glory, as He appears to the angelic host; by His back parts this glory moderated; by GOD's covering Moses with His hand, perhaps is meant, that He fortified him against those fatal effects of astonishment, which, without Divine support, such a vision would have produced.

By *proclaiming His name*, we may understand, that the LORD vouchsafed to make known His *nature* and *attributes*. From this proclamation we learn, that the GOD of Israel is the SUPREME BEING, the LORD of the whole creation. The same who was known in His *Divine Image* as the LORD GOD; that He is by nature *merciful*, &c. but at the same time *just*; and that He is a *jealous* GOD; that is, He requires to be honoured by His creatures above all Beings, and will not suffer any thing to stand in competition with Him, to assume those titles, or receive that homage, which is due to Him alone.

As soon as Moses was assured that the LORD *would* pardon transgression and sin, he intreated Him to forgive the iniquity of the Israelites; which, in consideration of Moses's intercession, and the penitence they had lately expressed, GOD of His infinite mercy did; and received them again into favour, on conditions consistent with His honour, and their duty.

Without doubt, Moses was joyfully received by the repentant Israelites, when he returned from the Mount with the Testimony of the Covenant in his hands. As the Mediator of this Covenant, the LORD distinguished
Moses

Moses from the people, by shedding a visible glory on him. This served to confirm their belief in the relation which Moses doubtless gave, of what had lately been revealed to him.

In this section we perceive the value of Divine Revelation ; without this, the nature and attributes of the SUPREME BEING could not have been ascertained ; for supposing that mankind could have discovered by the light of *reason*, that GOD is *good, gracious, and merciful*, they could not have been absolutely sure that He would *pardon sin* ; neither could they have known that He will not *clear the guilty* ; that is, pass over guilt, without some atonement being made for it ; and this ignorance might have occasioned them to fall into the extremes of slavish fear, or ill-founded confidence.

It certainly must have afforded great satisfaction to Moses and the Israelites, to know what kind of a Being GOD is, in respect to His Divine attributes ; and Christians may meditate on this portion of Scripture with delight and advantage. As GOD is *merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth*, He has a just claim to our love, gratitude, and obedience. As He will not *clear the guilty*, but visit the sin, for which atonement is not made, and pardon obtained, upon children's children, unto the third and fourth generation, we should be careful to avoid sin, and desirous to receive His gracious pardon, through our Mediator, who has made atonement for the sins of the *whole world*, but whose *intercession* is still necessary for *individuals*.

From the remarkable instance which is here recorded of the favour of the LORD to Moses, we learn, that the ALMIGHTY is not displeased with those who wish to know Him ; and we may assure ourselves, that though GOD does not visibly appear to us, He will display His
attributes

attributes to the minds of those who truly love Him, so that they shall sensibly feel, that *He is good and gracious, long suffering, abundant in goodness and truth.*

SECTION III.

THE PEOPLE'S FREE-WILL OFFERINGS—A DESCRIPTION OF THE TABERNACLE AND ITS APPURTENANCES, &c.

THE favour of the LORD being thus happily restored to his people Israel, He vouchsafed to draw near to them again; and to shew that He graciously designed to dwell or abide among them, the LORD restored to Moses the Testimony of his Covenant, written like that which Moses broke when he saw the people worshipping the golden calf at his descent from Mount Sinai. Having received the Tables of the Law, Moses gathered the people together, and after giving them a very strict injunction to keep the Sabbath-day holy, as the *sign* which was above all things to distinguish them from idolators, as the people of the LORD, the Creator of heaven and earth; he called upon every man who had a willing heart to make an offering of gold, silver, brass, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine linen, rams' skins, badgers' skins, shittim wood, oil, spices, and precious stones; and upon all who had skill and ingenuity, to assist in making a Tabernacle or Sanctuary to serve as a receptacle for the Ark of the Covenant, and also as a place of public worship. For making this Tabernacle and all the furniture and utensils suitable to it, Moses had received particular instructions from the LORD during his forty days continuance on the mount; likewise for ordaining a priesthood, and clothing the Priests in a distinguishing manner.

No sooner was the summons issued by Moses, than a general emulation prevailed among the people, both men and women, and great quantities of gold, silver, jewels,

jewels, and other precious materials, which they had brought out of Egypt, and hitherto had had no use for, were in a short time collected.

Moses then informed the people that the LORD had chosen two men, Bazaleel, of the tribe of Judah, and Aholiab, of the tribe of Dan, to be master workmen; and had inspired them with wisdom, so that, without any human instruction, they should be able to contrive all kinds of curious works for the ornaments of the Tabernacle, &c. He then called for Bazaleel and Aholiab, and other men, who were also filled with ingenuity by the SPIRIT OF THE LORD, and committed to them the offerings which the people had brought, and they immediately set about the necessary preparations*.

Such an ardent desire now prevailed among the people, to shew their devotion to the LORD, that every morning and evening one or other brought fresh offerings, till Moses, finding the supplies more than sufficient, caused proclamation to be made that they might desist. The work of the Tabernacle now went on with the greatest expedition. While the men of Israel were employed about the laborious and ornamental parts of it, the women spun and prepared linen for the hangings, and for the priests' garments.

As the people dwelt in tents, the Tabernacle, or House of the LORD, was of the same construction, that it might conveniently be taken down, in order to be removed from place to place. "The Tabernacle was in the form of an oblong square, thirty cubits in length, and ten in height and breadth; and it was divided into two parts, viz. the *Holy Place*, and the *Holy of Holies*. The *Holy Place* was twenty cubits long and ten wide; in this stood the golden candlestick and the altar of in-

* See Exodus, Chap. xxxv. 35.

cense. The *Holy of Holies*, which was also called the *Sanctuary*, was ten cubits long and ten broad: it contained the *Ark of the Covenant*, and was separated from the *Holy Place* by a veil or hanging made of rich embroidered linen, which hung upon four pillars of Shittim or cedar wood, that were covered with plates of gold, but had their bases made of brass; and at the entrance of the Tabernacle, instead of a door, there was a veil of the same work, sustained by the like pillars, which separated it from the outward court*.

“ The boards or planks, of which the body of the Tabernacle was formed, were in all forty-eight, each a cubit and a half wide, and ten cubits high; twenty of them went to make up each side of the Tabernacle, and at the west end of it were the other eight, which were all let into one another by tenons above and below, and compacted together by bars running from one end of it to the other; but the east end was open, and only covered with a rich curtain.

“ The roof of the Tabernacle was a square frame of planks, resting upon their bases; and over these were coverings or curtains of different kinds; of these the first in the inside was made of fine linen, curiously embroidered in various colours, of crimson and scarlet, purple and blue. The next was made of goats hair, neatly woven together, and the last of sheep or badgers' skins (some dyed red, and others blue), which were to preserve the rich curtains from wet.

“ Round about the Tabernacle was a large oblong court, an hundred cubits long, and fifty broad, encompassed with pillars overlaid with silver, and whose capitals were of the same metal, but their bases were of brass. Ten of these pillars stood towards the west, six to the east, twenty to the north, and twenty to the south,

* Stackhouse on the Bible. See also Exodus xxxvi. and sequel.

at five cubits distance from each other ; and over these hung curtains made of twined linen thread, in the manner of net-work, which surrounded the Tabernacle on all sides, except at the entrance of the court, which was twenty cubits wide, and sustained with four columns overlaid with plates of silver. These columns had their capitals and bases of brass, and stood at proportionable distances, and were covered with a curtain made of richer materials.

“ In this court, and opposite to the entrance of the Tabernacle, stood the *Altar of Burnt Offerings*, in the open air, that the fire, which was kept perpetually upon it, and the smoke arising from the victims that were burnt there, might not soil the Tabernacle. It was five cubits long, as much in width, and three cubits high, was placed upon a basis of stone work, and covered both within and without with plates of brass.

“ At the four corners of this Altar were four parts like horns, covered with the same metal ; and as the altar itself was hollow, and open both at the top and bottom, from these horns there hung a grate made of brass (fastened with four rings and four chains) on which the wood and the sacrifice were burnt, and as the ashes fell through, they were received below in a pan. At a very small distance from this altar, there stood, on the south side, a brazen vessel, which on account of its extraordinary size, was called the *Brazen Sea*, in which the priests used to wash their feet, whenever they were to offer sacrifice, or to go into the Tabernacle.

“ In that part of the Tabernacle, which was called the *Holy Place*, there was, on the north side, a table made of Shittim wood, covered with gold, two cubits long, one in breadth, and one and a half in length ; about the edge of it was an ornament or border made of

of gold, together with a crown of gold in the middle, and at each end was placed an offering of the *shew bread*, viz. six loaves in a pile, to represent the twelve tribes. The bread was changed every day, and not allowed to be eaten by any but the priests.

“ Over against this table, on the south side, stood the candlestick, which was made of pure gold, upon a basis of the same metal, and had seven branches on each side, and one in the middle. The branches were at equal distances, adorned with six flowers like lilies, with as many knobs like apples, and little bowls like half almond shells placed alternately, and upon each of these branches there was a *golden lamp*, which was lighted every evening, and extinguished every morning.

“ Betwixt the table and the candlestick was placed the *Altar of Incense*, which was but one cubit in length and breadth, and two cubits high; but it was covered with plates of brass, and had a crown of gold over it. Every morning and every evening, the priest in waiting for that week offered incense of a particular composition upon this altar, and for this end he carried a smoking censer filled with fire, which he took from the altar of burnt offerings into the Tabernacle, and having placed it upon the other altar, retired.

“ The *ARK* was a kind of chest or coffer, made of Shittim wood, overlaid with pure gold within and without: it was two cubits and a half long, a cubit and a half broad, and the same in height, and round the top of it was a crown of gold: it had rings of gold at each corner, and there were staves made of Shittim wood, covered over with gold, to put through them to bear it by.

“ On the top of the Ark was the mercy-seat, which served as a covering to it, and at each end of this was a *cherub*,

cherub, with his face towards the other, their wings extended, so that they met and covered the mercy-seat*. In this Ark was deposited the Tables of Testimony, and it was placed in the Holy of Holies.

“Anciently every head of a family was a priest; but as the LORD had appointed a Tabernacle, or habitation of His holiness, and would not allow the people to enter the place where He designed to display His glory, He thought proper to establish an order of priests, to be His immediate servants.”

When Moses was on the mount the first time, he received command from the LORD to separate Aaron and his sons for the priests' office, and gave directions in respect to the habits they should wear, which were afterwards made. The dress of Aaron, as High Priest, was very magnificent. It consisted of the Ephod, with the breast-plate and girdle, the robe of the Ephod, the embroidered linen coat, and the mitre. These were all of linen, and covered the whole body from the neck to the heels; over these was a purple or blue tunick, which reached not so low, but was curiously wrought all over, and at the bottom of it were pomegranates and bells, at equal distances; the pomegranates were made of purple and crimson wool, and the bells of gold: the intent of the latter was to let the people know, by the sound of them, when the High Priest was going into the Sanctuary, and when he was coming out; and also to intimate to them, that he should not go without ceremony into the presence of God.

The Ephod was a kind of girdle, embroidered with gold thread, and other threads of divers colours, which, being brought from behind the neck over the two

* The form of the Cherubim cannot from Scripture be exactly ascertained.

shoulders, was put across upon the stomach, and hung down as low as the feet. Upon that part of it which crossed the shoulders were two large precious stones, on which were engraven the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, six on each stone ; and where the Ephod crossed the breast, there was a square ornament called the breast-plate, wherein were set twelve precious stones, with the names of the twelve tribes engraven on them, on each stone one. In the breast plate was the URIM and THUMMIM, or the ORACLE OF GOD, by which the Divine Will on particular occasions was made known. The girdle of the Ephod was embroidered like the rest, and fastened close to the waist.

The Mitre was of fine linen ; it covered the head, and on the forehead was a plate of gold ; on which was engraven, HOLINESS TO THE LORD ; this plate was also called the *Holy Crown*. The mitre was tied behind with two ribbons fastened to its ends.

The other priests had only a simple tunick, a linen-mitre or bonnet, and a girdle, &c.

There was a great variety of utensils for the Tabernacle service, such as censers, basons, spoons, &c. made of gold or brass.

It is impossible for us to know *all* that was meant by the institutions under the Mosaic dispensation ; but we may collect, from several parts of the New Testament, that they were designed as *types* or representations of various particulars in the heavenly kingdom ; and also as pledges of the blessings that GOD's faithful people should enjoy in a future state.

We have before observed, that Moses was the Mediator between the LORD and the people : his mediation, after the establishment of the priesthood, seems to have related chiefly to their *temporal* affairs ; but he as
the

the prophet of the LORD exhorted and instructed them in this duty. In respect to *spiritual* concerns, the High Priest was the *Mediator*, who was to make atonement and intercession for them, and his dress indicated the nature and efficacy of his office: its magnificence implied the dignity of that Great Being, whose minister he was.

The literal meaning of the words URIM and THUMMIM, are said to be *light* and *perfection*; or *the shining* and *the perfect*. There are various conjectures concerning the URIM and THUMMIM; but as the Scriptures are silent, it is impossible to come at any certainty on this head: all we know is, that the Breast-plate contained within it something which was the appointed means of making known the Divine will on solemn occasions.

The inscription on the golden plate, which was on the front of the mitre, signified, that the people were not to adore the High Priest; but to ascribe *holiness* to the LORD only. The common priests were assistants to the High Priest.

In about six months, all the work of the Tabernacle, and all its appendages was completed. The whole amount of the gold that the people offered, was about 159,000*l.*; in silver, about 34,000*l.* of our money; exclusive of 8050*l.* of brass*.

SECTION IV.

THE SETTING UP OF THE TABERNACLE.

From Exodus, Chap. xxxix, xl.

THUS was all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation finished: and the children of Israel

* The chapters which give an account of these things are omitted, as too long for insertion.

did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did they.

And they brought the tabernacle unto Moses, the tent and all his furniture.

The clothes of service to do service in the holy place, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and his sons' garments to minister in the priest's office.

According to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel made all the work.

And Moses did look upon all the work, and behold they had done it as the LORD had commanded, even so had they done it : and Moses blessed them.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation.

And thou shalt bring Aaron and his sons unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and wash them with water. And thou shalt bring a bullock for a sin offering, and two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread.

And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him : that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.

And thou shalt bring his sons, and clothe them with coats.

And thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office : for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood, throughout their generations.

And it came to pass, in the first month, in the second year, on the first day of the month, that Moses reared up the tabernacle.

And he took and put the testimony into the ark, and set the staves on the ark, and put the mercy-seat above upon the ark.

And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the vail of the covering, and covered the ark of the testimony, as the LORD commanded Moses.

And he put the table in the tent of the congregation, upon the side of the tabernacle northward without the vail.

And he set the bread in order upon it, before the LORD; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

And he put the candlestick in the tent of the congregation, over against the table, on the side of the tabernacle southward.

And he lighted the lamps before the LORD: as the LORD commanded Moses.

And he put the golden altar in the tent of the congregation, before the vail: and he burnt sweet incense thereon; as the LORD commanded Moses. And he set up the hanging, at the door of the tabernacle.

And he put the altar of burnt-offering by the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation, and offered upon it the burnt-offering, and the meat-offering; as the Lord commanded Moses.

And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate: so Moses finished the work.

Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

And the assembly was gathered together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

And Moses said unto the congregation, This is the thing which the LORD commanded to be done.

And Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water.

And

And he put upon him the coat, and girded him with the girdle, and cloathed him with the robe, and put the ephod upon him, and he girded him with the curious girdle of the ephod, and bound it unto him therewith.

And he put the breast-plate upon him : also he put in the breast-plate the Urim and Thummim.

And he put the mitre upon his head ; also upon the mitre, even upon his fore-front did he put the golden plate, the holy crown ; as the LORD commanded Moses.

And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him to sanctify him.

And Moses brought Aaron's sons, and put coats upon them, and girded them with girdles, and put bonnets upon them ; as the LORD commanded Moses.

And Moses offered for them sin-offerings, and burnt-offerings, and the ram of consecration, and the wave-offering ; and he poured blood round about the altar.

And Moses took of the anointing oil, and of the blood which was upon the altar, and sprinkled it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon his sons' garments with him ; and sanctified Aaron, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him.

And Moses said unto Aaron and his sons, Ye shall not go out of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation in seven days, until the days of your consecration be at an end ; for seven days shall he consecrate you, as he hath done this day, so the LORD had commanded to do, to make an atonement for you.

Therefore shall ye abide at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation day and night, seven days, and keep the charge of the LORD, that ye die not, for so I am commanded.

So Aaron and his sons did all things which the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As Moses was the *mediator of the covenant*, he was in that character, allowed to offer the sacrifice of atonement for *himself*, and to dedicate the altar, but it is evident, that he was a sinner, as well as the rest of humankind, or he would not have stood in need of atonement: we may suppose, that fire from Heaven consumed the victim he offered.

The LORD himself sanctified the Tabernacle by His glorious PRESENCE.

It was necessary to acquaint the people, that Aaron and his sons were chosen to the priesthood by Divine command, that they might honour them accordingly.

The priests were washed by Moses, to signify, that none are clean in the sight of the LORD who are not purified by the mediator.

The oil with which Aaron and his sons were anointed, was a kind of liquid ointment, composed of myrrh, cinnamon, and other rich spices, mixed up with olive oil; and there was none to be made like it on pain of death. All the vessels of the tabernacle, as well as the priests, were anointed with it, to signify that they were set apart from common uses as instruments of holy worship.

To intimate that the priests had no intrinsic holiness, they were required to bring sacrifices to the mediator, that he might make atonement for them, and consecrate them to the LORD!

With what joy must the Israelites have beheld the tabernacle when every thing was placed in order, and prepared for their holding communion with the LORD!

with

With what joy should Christians enter into these sacred places, in which the LORD is equally present though invisible !

Though priests have no intrinsic holiness, every one ordained for the sacred offices of religion should be honoured and respected as the minister of GOD.

SECTION V.

THE FIRST SERVICE IN THE TABERNACLE.

From Levit. Chap. ix.

AND it came to pass on the eighth day, that Moses called Aaron and his sons, and the elders of Israel ; and he said unto Aaron, Take thee a young calf for a sin-offering, and a ram for a burnt-offering, without blemish, and offer them before the LORD.

And unto the children of Israel thou shalt speak saying, Take ye a kid of the goats for a sin offering ; and a calf, and a lamb, both of the first year, without blemish, for a burnt offering ; also a bullock and a ram, for peace-offerings, to sacrifice before the LORD ; and a meat-offering mingled with oil ; for to-day the LORD will appear unto you.

And they brought that which Moses commanded before the tabernacle of the congregation ; and all the congregation drew near and stood before the LORD.

And Moses said, This is the thing which the LORD commanded that ye should do ; and the glory of the LORD shall appear unto you.

And Moses said unto Aaron, Go unto the altar, and offer thy sin-offering, and thy burnt-offering, and make an atonement for thyself, and for the people : and offer the offering of the people, and make an atonement for them ; as the LORD commanded.

Aaron therefore went unto the altar, and slew the calf of the sin-offering, which was for himself.

And the sons of Aaron brought the blood unto him ; and he dipped his finger in the blood, and put it upon the horns of the altar, and poured out the blood at the bottom of the altar : but the fat, and the kidneys, and the caul above the liver of the sin-offering he burnt upon the altar ; as the LORD commanded Moses.

And the flesh and the hide he burnt with fire, without the camp.

And he slew the burnt-offering ; and Aaron's sons presented unto him the blood, which he sprinkled round about upon the altar.

And they presented the burnt-offering unto him, with the pieces thereof, and the head ; and he burnt them upon the altar.

And he did wash the inwards and the legs, and burnt them upon the burnt-offering on the altar.

And he brought the people's offering, and took the goat, which was the sin offering for the people, and slew it and offered it for sin, as the first.

And he brought the burnt-offering, and offered it according to the manner.

And he brought the meat-offering, and took an handful thereof, and burnt it upon the altar, beside the burnt sacrifice of the morning.

He slew also the bullock and the ram for a sacrifice of peace-offerings, which was for the people : and Aaron's sons presented unto him the blood, (which he sprinkled upon the altar round about) and the fat of the bullock, and of the ram, the rump, and that which covereth the inwards, and the kidneys, and the caul above the liver ; and the breasts and the right shoulder Aaron waved for a wave-offering before the LORD, as Moses commanded.

And Aaron lifted up his hand towards the people ; and blessed them ; and came down from offering of the sin-offering, and the burnt-offering, and peace-offerings.

And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people : and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the people.

And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering, and the fat : which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

From this section we may form a good idea of the nature of the Jewish sacrifices, and probably of the first sacrifices also offered by Cain and Abel, though the number of offences being multiplied, and a particular deliverance wrought for Israel, there were doubtless additional ceremonies.

The conditions of the sacrifices under the Mosaic Dispensation were, that the victims and offerings should be without blemish, and presented publicly before the congregation, in token that those for whom they were offered confessed themselves to be sinners, standing in need of redemption. In the New Testament, we see, what exact analogy these particulars bore to CHRIST ; and we also find, that not only the victims, but the various sorts of sacrifices, bore an evident reference to Him. It was not the blood of bulls, or of goats, that took away sin* ; but these animals were appointed as means of procuring, through *faith* in GOD's mercy, an interest in the blood of the GREAT REDEEMER, of

* Heb. x. 4.

whose *human nature* all the victims that were slain, according to the ordinances of GOD, from the time of Adam's fall to the crucifixion of our Saviour, were representatives ; and as GOD had, even before the world was created, determined to accept of the death of the REDEEMER, and knew that he would offer Himself on the cross for the redemption of mankind, it may properly be said, that CHRIST *was slain from the foundation of the world**, because His death operated, through Divine grace, long before it happened ; GOD, for the sake of the salvation of mankind, considering that as actually done, which he foreknew would be done.

Moses, by Divine appointment, as the Mediator of the Temporal Covenant, purified and consecrated the priests, and made atonement for them with the blood of beasts, so that they were fit to offer sacrifices ; and the sacrifices they offered for themselves, expressive of their faith, procured them admittance into the *earthly Tabernacle* ; but into the *Tabernacle* belonging to the *Everlasting Covenant*, not made with hands, which the LORD pitched, and not man, even Heaven itself †, none can enter, who are not purified by the GREAT HIGH PRIEST nor will any blood avail, but that of the REDEEMER the true Paschal Lamb.

It is manifest, from this short view of the Jewish sacrifices, that, under the first Covenant, there was no remission of sins, without shedding the blood of an innocent victim, by way of atonement for the guilt of a sinner ; and we find from several texts of Scripture, that the first covenant was designed as a shadow of the *Everlasting Covenant*. We should steadfastly hold fast the doctrine of atonement for the sins of the world by the blood of CHRIST. It must appear evident, to un-

* Rev. xiii. 8.

† Heb. ix. 11, 12.

prejudiced reason, that we cannot clear *ourselves* from the guilt of sin ; for having once sinned, sinners we should remain for ever in the sight of God, because we cannot call back our offences, nor do any thing to satisfy Divine justice ; all our hopes of pardon then must arise from our reliance on the mercy of God ; and God has expressly revealed in the Scriptures, that it is inconsistent with His justice to clear the guilty, without *atonement* * : how foolish, then, would it be, to slight the means God has so graciously appointed for salvation, and render ineffectual, through unbelief, the blood of CHRIST, with which he hath redeemed us to God, and opened a way to everlasting life and happiness !—Had the Israelites despised the sacrifices which the LORD ordained, and relied on their own repentance only, they never could have obtained pardon, nor have been permitted to behold His glory on earth ; and if we, who have been initiated into the Christian Covenant, despise the sacrifice of our GREAT REDEEMER, we shall never behold him in Heaven.

SECTION VI.

OF THE SOLEMN FESTIVALS.

THE Israelites were required to observe a variety of holy times, besides the weekly Sabbath, particularly three great festivals, viz. the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The first of these was joined to the Passover, which, as has been already related, was kept in remembrance of the LORD's passing over the houses of the

* See Exod. xxxiv. 7.

Israelites, when the first born of the Egyptians were destroyed.

The Feast of Pentecost, which was also called the Feast of Weeks, was the next: at this they offered the first produce of their wheat harvest, in acknowledgment that they were indebted to God's bounty for the increase of their corn.

The feast of Tabernacles was the third, celebrated when they had gathered in their corn and fruits. The propriety of these institutions is so evident, that there is no need of a comment on them. These probably made a part of the primitive religion of Mankind after the Fall.

Besides these, were the Feast of the New Moons, the Feast of Trumpets, and the great Day of Atonement.

The first was designed to mark to the Israelites the beginning of every month; and the method of keeping it was by blowing a silver trumpet over their sacrifices, to announce the appearance of the new moon.

The feast of trumpets was observed with peculiar sacrifices, attended with a solemn blowing of trumpets; an holy assembly was kept, it was held at the beginning of the seventh month; this was counted the first month of the year for *civil* affairs, as that in which the passover was kept was for *religious* matters.

The great Day of Atonement was the tenth day of the seventh month; it was appointed as a day of general fasting and humiliation, repentance and atonement for all the people. On this day the high priest, dressed in his richest garments, attended at the door of the tabernacle, and after having made an atonement for himself and his house, he took for the congregation two kids of the goats, and a ram for a burnt-offering. When he had presented the former at the door of the tabernacle,

nacle, he cast lots upon them, one for the LORD and the other for the people : that goat which fell to the LORD's lot was killed and offered as a sin-offering, but that for the people was preserved alive. The high priest then took a censer full of fire from the golden altar, and placed it as a symbol of the people's prayers on the mercy-seat, and having sprinkled the mercy-seat with the blood of the bullock, which had been slain as a sin-offering for himself and his house, he went out to kill the goat that was devoted to die, and performed the same ceremony with some of its blood. After this the live goat was brought forth, and the High Priest laid his hands on its head, at the same time making a general confession over it of the people's sins ; as soon as this was done the goat was sent away to a land uninhabited, and let loose in a wilderness. This was called the *Scape Goat*, and he was a lively symbol of the SAVIOUR of the world, bearing the sin of all mankind. On this day of the year alone the HIGH PRIEST entered the *Holy of Holies*, as a type of the GREAT HIGH PRIEST who, after having past the veil of flesh, entered into the Heaven of Heavens, and presented his own blood which had been shed as an atonement for the sins of the whole world*.

On the three great festivals all the males were to *appear before the LORD*, to assemble together in that place where the ark and the tabernacle were fixed. The Israelites reckoned their sabbaths, feasts, &c. from sunset one evening, till the same time the next. When they appeared before GOD at the great festivals, they were required to bring the *tithe*, or tenth part, of their corn, wine, and oil, and the first born of their cattle ; but they themselves were to partake in eating it, though

* Heb. ix.

the greatest part was to be given to the Priests and Levites. The first born of their sons were presented to the LORD a few days after their birth ; but they were allowed to redeem them, by paying a small sum of money ; such beasts as were not fit to eat, but useful for labour, were also redeemed, by offering some other animal in their stead ; a lamb for an ass, for instance.

These ceremonies, and others, which it is needless to enumerate, served not only as *shadows* or *types*, of the benefits of the Everlasting Covenant, but were useful in distinguishing the Israelites from all other nations, as an holy people, and the visible Church of GOD ; and also to employ them in a variety of outward forms of religion ; they would otherwise have been tempted to follow the idolatries and superstitions of the surrounding nations.

As for the political or judicial law of the Israelites, it is sufficient to say, that the LORD GOD condescended to be their *King* and *Governor*, and appointed various kinds of governors under Him, as He thought fit. — The tabernacle may therefore be considered, not only as the residence of their GOD, but the palace of their KING also*. The court of the tabernacle was the court of the Palace ; the Holy of Holies was His Presence chamber ; the Mercy-seat was his Throne. The Cherubims represented the Cherubims in heaven, and the priests were His ministers of state as King ; Moses as the mediator, and Aaron as high priest, His prime-ministers.

The shew-bread, together with such a part of the sacrifices as was given to the priests, represented provision for the LORD's household, &c. Whatever other gover-

* Dr. Watts's View of Scripture History.

nors were made from time to time, either captains, judges, or kings, they were but deputies to the LORD GOD, who put them in, and dismissed them, at his pleasure.

Among their peculiar laws, the Israelites had one which strictly enjoined them to make no peace with the seven nations of Canaan; every soldier, who in time of war was afraid, might go home.

In respect of their food, they were obliged to abstain from many kinds of meat, but especially from blood; and they were obliged to wash themselves very frequently.

In their dress, a distinction was made between the habits of the men and women, and they were required to put fringes on their garments, with a border of blue, that they might look upon it, and remember the commandments of the LORD.

Every seventh year their land was to rest from sowing and ploughing, and GOD promised to give them food enough in the sixth year for two years.

Every fiftieth year, which was called the year of Jubilee, all houses and lands that were sold were to return to their former possessors.

He who stole a man was to die for it; and in all cases of real injury, or mischief, life was to pay for life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, &c. And this was the penalty of a false witness, who intended to bring mischief on another.

The usual punishments of criminals among the Israelites were, a fine of money or cattle to be paid, or cutting off from the congregation, scourging or beating (not exceeding forty-nine stripes), the loss of a limb, or the forfeiture of life.

Persons were cut off from the congregation various ways. In case of presumptuous rebellion against the
LORD,

LORD, they were sometimes devoted to sudden death, by a signal judgment from Heaven. In some cases they were put to death by the hands of the magistrate; but in lesser crimes, it only meant being excommunicated, or excluded, for a time, from the privileges of God's people.

The usual way of putting criminals to death was either by stoning them, or hanging them on a tree.

We now see the Israelites, after having been delivered in a most miraculous manner from Egyptian bondage, formed into a nation having the LORD GOD for their KING, and a body of laws of Divine institution. In these particulars they were honoured above all the people at that time upon earth. It was not for any merit of their own, that God first separated them to Himself, but for the sake of the oath which He had sworn unto Abraham. They were redeemed from Egyptian bondage by his *free mercy*; and after they had forfeited His Divine protection, they were saved from destruction, as a nation, by the same mercy, through the mediation of Moses, at whose intercession the LORD GOD promised to dwell among them, and conduct them to the place of rest, which he had provided for them. The LORD accordingly caused a palace to be built for the habitation of His holiness, and appointed ministers, &c. He also appointed means whereby atonement might be made for sin, and acceptable services performed. But they were not to depend entirely on ritual observances; these were appointed as *means of grace and reconciliation*; but it was required, that they should also practice *moral virtues*, and distinguish themselves from the heathens, by the purity and holiness of their lives and conversations*,

* See Leviticus xix, xx, xxv, xxvi.

by a strict adherence to truth, honesty, sincerity, justice, &c.—They were to banish from their minds hatred and revenge, and to cherish brotherly love and charity. If God's kindness produced these effects, they were encouraged to expect farther blessings from Him; but if they were disobedient, and abused His mercies, and exercised cruelties towards their fellow-creatures, they subjected themselves to the severities of His wrath, and could not be restored to His favour without repentance, atonement, and intercession; so that the Jewish constitution was designed of God as a scheme for promoting true religion and virtue, and as a shadow of the divine things*.

We may suppose, that the people were very desirous of performing acts of religious worship, as soon as they had a place appointed for it; and it was a great advantage to them to have the mode settled, for it was particularly necessary that their worship should be uniform, and that they should agree in their service, as they were to set an example of piety and holiness to the surrounding nations.

The Mosaic institutions were excellently calculated to express the condition of men, as *creatures* and *sinner*s, and to awaken the attention of idolaters, and make them desirous of being received into a communion, which bore such evident marks of Divine appointment.

The generality of the Israelites did not understand the *spiritual meaning* of their own ceremonies in its full extent; for the Mosaic Dispensation was the childish state of the Church of God †; but they knew

* See a Key to the Apostolic Writings prefixed to a Paraphrase on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, by John Taylor, fourth edition, published in 1697.

† Gal. iv. 1, 2, 3, &c.

as much as was essential to their salvation ; and it is very satisfactory to Christians, to observe the agreement between the Covenant made with GOD's chosen people Israel, and that which was afterwards sealed by the blood of Christ ; because the fulfilment of the Divine promises under the one, is an earnest of the fulfilment of them under the other. Only let us do our part, and we may be certain GOD will faithfully perform his.

SECTION VII.

THE DEATH OF NADAB AND ABIHU.

From Levit. Chap. x.

AND Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not.

And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them ; and they died before the LORD.

Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.

And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said unto them, Come near, carry your brethren, from before the sanctuary out of the camp.

So they went near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp : as Moses had said.

And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes ; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people : but let your brethren, the whole house

house of Israel, bewail the burning which the LORD hath kindled.

And ye shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: for the anointing oil of the LORD is upon you. And they did according to the word of Moses.

And the LORD spake unto Aaron, saying, Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die; it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The crime of the rash young men, who were cut off in so awful a manner, was *presumptuous sin*. They were the order of priests, who took it by turns to burn incense on the golden altar. The LORD had sent fire from Heaven to burn the first sacrifices that were laid on this altar, this was called *Holy Fire*, and it was the business of the priests to keep it from being extinguished. Nadab and Abihu, regardless of the Divine command, which Moses had declared to them, did not wait till it was their turn to burn incense, but took their censers (the utensils made for carrying the offering to the altar) and performed what was instituted as a solemn act of praise, with indecorum and irreverence; despising the *Holy Fire*, they made use of *common fire*, which was a great affront to the Divine Majesty.

There

There is some reason to suppose, from the subsequent command to the priests to abstain from wine, that Nadab and Abihu were in a state of intoxication, from having indulged their appetites too freely with the portion that was allotted to them. The priests, being entirely devoted to the services of religion, were raised above the necessity of procuring subsistence for themselves ; and it was upon this account, that a certain portion of the sacrifices was appropriated to their maintenance.

It was necessary to make an example of the first offenders, in order to deter others from committing the like crime : accordingly we find, that the Holy Fire, which they despised, was made the instrument of their punishment.

Though from a difference of situation we never can be guilty of the very same crime for which these young men suffered, yet we may collect useful instruction from the relation of it, which should warn us to observe the utmost reverence and devotion in every part of religious worship.

SECTION VIII.

MOSES NUMBERS the PEOPLE—THE ORDER OF ENCAMPMENT—THE LORD'S BLESSING.

As the children of Israel were very numerous, and the LORD vouchsafed to be their King, He commanded Moses and Aaron to take account of his subjects ; and to regulate encampments, for they dwelt in tents, which they carried with them when they moved. When Jacob came into Egypt, his whole family consisted of seventy persons : they increased in two hundred and fifteen

fifteen years, to upwards of six hundred twenty-five thousand. We may justly suppose, that, besides those which were numbered, there were double the number of women, children, and sick persons; amounting in the whole, to at least one million eight hundred seventy-one thousand one hundred persons. What quantities of food must fall daily from heaven to feed such multitudes! God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that "he would greatly multiply their seed," were now amply fulfilled. A very exact account was taken of the people, in order to distinguish what tribe and family every man belonged to. "The whole* body of the people were divided into four large battalions, so placed as to inclose the tabernacle, and each under one general standard. The standard of the camp of Judah was first; it consisted of the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, which pitched on the east side of the tabernacle. On the south side was the standard of the camp of Reuben; under which were the tribes of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad. On the west side was the standard of the camp of Ephraim; under which were the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin. And on the north side was the standard of the camp of Dan; under which was the tribes of Dan, Napthali, and Ashur. Between these four great camps and the tabernacle were pitched the four lesser camps of the priests and the Levites, who had their attendants about it. On the east side encamped Moses and Aaron, and Aaron's sons, who had the charge of the sanctuary. On the south side were the Kohathites, a part of the Levites descended from Kohath, the second son of Levi. On the west side were the Gershonites, another

* Stackhouse on the Bible.

branch of the Levites, descended from Gershon, Levi's eldest son. On the north side were the Merarites, the remaining part of the Levites, who sprang from Merari, Levi's youngest son."

" This was the order of the Israelites encamping ; and the method of their marching was thus : Whenever they were to decamp (which was always when the pillar of the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle) the trumpet sounded, and upon the first alarm, the standard of Judah being raised, the three tribes which belonged to it set forward ; upon which, the tabernacle was immediately taken down, and the Gershonites and Merarites attended the waggons with the boards and staves of it. When these were on their march, a second alarm sounded ; upon which, the standard of Reuben's camp advanced, with the three tribes under it, bearing the sanctuary ; which, because it was holy, and not so cumbersome as the pillars and boards of the tabernacle, was not put into a waggon, but carried upon men's shoulders. Next followed the standard of Ephraim's camp, with the three tribes belonging to it. And last of all, the other three tribes, under the standard of Dan, brought up the rear." Every thing was contrived in a most excellent manner, to preserve regularity and decorum, and prevent confusion and disputes : each person was informed of his proper business, and knowing that all was settled by God's appointment, they readily submitted to it : the Levites were particularly honoured, as a reward for their fidelity to God, in slaying those who worshipped the golden calf.

The camp of Israel must have made a very beautiful appearance ; especially if we consider, that the glory of God was manifested in the midst of it. The tribe of
Judah

Judah had the pre-eminence. Judah was not the eldest son of Jacob; but this partly fulfilled a prophecy which Jacob spake a little before his death*.

To assure the people that they were under the divine protection, and to excite their gratitude, the LORD commanded Moses, to give directions to Aaron and his sons to pronounce the following blessing upon them, when they assembled for public worship, which every sincere worshipper might apply to himself, "The LORD bless thee and keep thee; the LORD make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the LORD lift up the light of his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

And the LORD graciously promised that he would put his name upon Israel and bless them, so that it should evidently appear that He had chosen them for his peculiar people.

How gracious was the LORD in thus providing for the good order and happiness of his people!—We find regulations were made for due subordination among the multitudes, which composed the great congregation; and it certainly must be best for every nation to have a distinction of ranks and orders, both ecclesiastical and civil.

The blessing of the LORD, and the Divine promise which accompanied it, were the highest and most honourable privileges bestowed upon the Israelites. In imitation of Aaron and his sons, Christian ministers pronounce a blessing upon their congregations of a similar kind, founded upon the promises of the New Testament, *The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and*

* See Sect. lii. vol. i.

love of GOD, and of his SON JESUS CHRIST ; and the blessing of GOD ALMIGHTY, the FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY GHOST, be amongst you and remain with you always." How earnestly should we all endeavour to obtain an interest in these inestimable blessings !

SECTION IX.

THE PRINCES OFFERINGS*.

WHEN every thing was completely in order, the princes of the people, the heads of tribes, advanced with great solemnity to present their offerings, which consisted of six covered waggon and twelve oxen, a wagon for two princes, and for each one an ox ; and each prince offered one silver charger, one silver bowl, one golden spoon, one young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt-offering ; one kid of the goats for a sin-offering ; and for a sacrifice of peace-offerings two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year.

All the silver vessels together weighed two thousand four hundred shekels, and the gold of the spoons one hundred and twenty shekels : so that each dish or charger weighed about sixty ounces, according to our weights, each bowl about thirty-five ounces, and the golden spoons about five ounces a piece. It pleased the LORD to assure Moses of His acceptance of these offerings, by speaking to him, as He had promised to do, from between the cherubims on the Mercy-seat. After this, the LORD commanded, that the Levites should be

* See Numb. vii. viii.

purified,

purified, by washing with water, &c. and brought before the Tabernacle of the congregation; and that the whole assembly of Israel should be gathered together, and put their hands upon the Levites, which they did; Aaron was then commanded to offer them to the LORD, as an offering from the children of Israel, to do the service of the LORD's House in their stead. Aaron then made an atonement for the Levites, who were from that time wholly separated from the other tribes; and entered on their holy office; for the LORD accepted them, instead of all the first-born, whom He had redeemed to Himself.

The princes of Israel have left an example to all persons, who are placed in exalted stations, to be foremost in acts of piety; and to be ready to employ some portion of their riches to the honour of GOD.

By appointing Priests and Levites Himself, the LORD put an honour upon the priestly office, and shewed, that those employed in his immediate service should be exempted from secular occupations, and regarded as holy persons.

SECTION X.

THE PASSOVER KEPT—A CLOUD GUIDETH THE ISRAELITES—THE PRAYERS OF MOSES.

From Numbers, Chap. ix. x.

AND the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month, of the second year, after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season.

And

And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, that they should keep the passover.

And they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at even, in the wilderness of Sinai : according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel.

And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely the tent of the testimony : and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning.

So it was alway : the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night.

And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle ; then after that, the children of Israel journeyed : and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents.

At the commandment of the LORD they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the LORD they journeyed : they kept the charge of the LORD, at the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

And it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony.

And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai ; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran.

And they first took their journey, according to the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

And they departed from the mount of the LORD three days journey : and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them in the three days journey, to search out a resting-place for them.

And

And the cloud of the LORD was upon them by day, when they went out of the camp.

And it came to pass when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered: and let them that hate thee, flee before thee.

And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

At the first institution of the Passover, the Israelites ate it in great haste in the land of Egypt; but in the wilderness they were able to celebrate it with more composure of mind, and had time to explain to their children the origin of this institution. Surely, when they reflected what a wonderful year the last had been to them, how miraculously they had been assisted and delivered from dangers, they must have entertained the most exalted sentiments of the goodness of GOD! How careful was GOD of His people! who, if left to themselves, would certainly have gone astray: nor are Christians less indebted to GOD'S PROVIDENCE, which protects them from numberless dangers and distresses. We should therefore studiously endeavour to avail ourselves of HIS HOLY WORD, which will afford as clear light to our minds in the way to Heaven, as the pillar of fire did to the eyes of the Israelites in their journey towards the land of Canaan.

By offering up prayers at the removing and resting of the Ark, Moses has set an example to governors to implore the blessing and guidance of Heaven in all important undertakings.

SECTION XI.

THE BURNING AT TABERAH—MURMURINGS AGAINST
MOSES—MANNA LOATHED.

From Numbers, Chap. xi.

AND when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.

And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched.

And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them.

And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick:

But now our soul is dried away; and there is nothing at all, besides this manna before our eyes.

And the manna was as coriander-seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium.

And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.

And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.

Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased.

And

And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Are all these people my children, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom (as a nursing father beareth the sucking child) unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?

Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat.

I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.

And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.

And I will come down and talk with thee there; and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.

And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow, and ye shall eat flesh (for you have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt) therefore the LORD will give you flesh, and ye shall eat.

Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days neither ten days, nor twenty days; but even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be

loathsome unto you : because that you have despised the LORD which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came ye forth out of Egypt ?

And Moses said, The people amongst whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen ; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month.

Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them ? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them ?

And the LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD's hand waxed short ? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee, or not.

And Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle.

And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders : and it came to pass that when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.

But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad : and the spirit rested upon them and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle, and they prophesied in the camp.

And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp.

And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them.

And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake ? Would to God that all the LORD's people were prophets

phets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them.

And Moses gat him into the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

And there went forth a wind from the LORD, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high, upon the face of the earth.

And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails; he that gathered least, gathered ten homers; and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp.

And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague.

And he called the name of that place, Kibroth-hattaavah; because there they buried the people that lusted.

And the people journeyed from Kibroth-hattaavah unto Hazeroth: and abode at Hazeroth.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though we are told that the Israelites did eat manna for forty years, there is no reason to suppose, that they were confined entirely to that kind of food; on the contrary, it appears, that they were allowed by their law, nay *required*, to eat a part of the beasts which were offered in sacrifices, with this restriction, that they

should not eat either the blood or fat. Of bread indeed they were destitute, for they were mere sojourners in the wilderness, and, having no fixed abode, they would have found it very inconvenient, if not impossible, to cultivate the earth, so as to supply themselves with corn and vegetables. Besides, sowing of grain would have been a sort of appropriation of that land, which was not given to them; and harvest work would have been extremely fatiguing in a barren wilderness; so that manna, being sent for bread, was a very signal mercy, for which they ought to have been daily thankful; no wonder that such ungrateful behaviour should provoke Divine justice to send judgments upon them.

The *mixt multitude* consisted of a number of people who went with the Israelites out of Egypt; who not being of the lineage of Jacob, were not numbered with the others. It seems to have been, by their suggestion, that the Israelites repined at their condition the second time; but the people of GOD ought not to have been influenced by those who tempted them from their duty.

It appears strange that Moses should express any doubts of the LORD's ability to effect his purpose; but we must consider, that he was not above the infirmities of human nature, and that he had a very severe trial of his meekness and patience. There was great reasonableness in his remonstrances; and GOD, who never exacts of his creatures what is inconsistent with the circumstances in which He is pleased to place them, suffered his arguments to prevail.—GOD did not require Moses to *bear the people alone*, who were become too turbulent for his sole management; but endued others with a proportionable share of that Divine wisdom, which had hitherto directed the judgment of Moses in
his

his government, that they might be able to assist him in the arduous task.

The two men who are said to have prophesied in the camp, are supposed to have declined the summons of Moses through excessive modesty, and a sense of unworthiness ; but being approved of the LORD, they exercised the gifts of praying, preaching, and praising God, in some private tent, with evident marks of Divine inspiration. When the friends of Moses, through zeal for his honour, requested him to forbid them, he gave a striking instance of his zeal and public spirit. " Enviest thou for my sake (said he). Would to God that *all* the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put His spirit upon them."—Every idea of personal honour, or distinction, vanished with Moses, when brought into competition with the good of his countrymen ; and he could cheerfully see others distinguished by the same powers with himself, if by this means the general interest might be promoted.

We may conclude that quails were very delicious food, by the LORD's sending them to gratify the people's desire of dainties, and by the avidity with which they gathered them up. The threatening which had been denounced, was enough, one would think, to caution them against eating to excess ; but they set no bounds to their appetites, and soon found the fatal effects of inordinate indulgence. From this portion of Scripture we learn, that it is a duty to be contented with such things as God bestows ; and that it is very wicked to desire any kind of enjoyment, which the state of life we are placed in by Providence will not admit of. And all Christians are admonished by it, not to desire to be under the *bondage of sin* for the sake of gratifying their sensual appetites, but rather to gather up with patience

that spiritual food, which came from Heaven, even the instruction of our SAVIOUR; though the depravity of human nature may render it less pleasing to their taste; since the latter will nourish the soul unto everlasting life, while an abundance of the other will produce diseases, fatal in their effects, both to body and soul.

SECTION XII.

AARON AND MIRIAM MURMUR AGAINST MOSES—
MIRIAM PUNISHED.

From Numbers, Chap. xii.

AND Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses.

And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it.

(Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)

And the LORD spake suddenly unto Moses and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out.

And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forth.

And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.

My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house.

With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently,

parently, and not in dark speeches ; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold : wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses ?

And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them, and he departed.

And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle, and behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow ; and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and behold, she was leprous.

And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned.

And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O GOD, I beseech thee.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received again. “ And Miriam was shut out of the camp “ seven days : ” and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Aaron and Miriam were guilty of great impiety and presumption towards GOD, as well as ingratitude to Moses, and acted from motives of envy and false pride, very displeasing to the LORD, or He would not have inflicted such an exemplary punishment on Miriam. They now learnt from GOD, that they must not presume to stand in competition with Moses ; for though they were occasionally endued with the gift of prophecy, still he was their superior, on account of his most honourable office of Mediator between GOD and the Israelites, in which he had acquitted himself with the utmost fidelity.

Aaron seems to have had an immediate sense of his

guilt, for he humbled himself, and acknowledged his fault; at the same time intreating Moses to pray for Miriam, which, agreeably to the usual meekness of his disposition, Moses instantly complied with.

By *the anger of the LORD being kindled*, perhaps is meant, that flashes of lightning darted from the cloudy pillar, expressive of God's displeasure; or the expression may signify, that their offence was such as the LORD, under that Dispensation, usually punished with sudden death.

The amiable behaviour of Moses affords an excellent lesson to those who have envious brothers or sisters; and Christians may learn from this lesson not only to honour the character of Moses, but to consider how much more highly they ought to esteem the Mediator of the Christian Covenant, who is infinitely superior to Moses.

Those who represent our Divine Redeemer as a mere man, a prophet only, are guilty of a similar offence to that of Aaron and Miriam, but in a much greater degree.

SECTION XIII.

SPIES SENT TO SEARCH THE LAND OF CANAAN—THE
TESTIMONY OF CALEB AND JOSHUA.

From Deut. Chap. i. Numb. xiii. xiv.

AND when they departed from Horeb, they came through that great and terrible wilderness of Paran, as the LORD commanded them; and came to Kadesh Barnea; and Moses said unto them, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the LORD our God doth give unto us.

Behold the LORD your God hath set the land before you; go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy

thy fathers hath said unto you : fear not, neither be discouraged.

And they came near unto him every one of them, and said, We will send men before us, to search out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel : of every tribe ye shall send a man which is a ruler among them.

And Moses, by the commandment of the LORD, sent them, and said, Go up into the mountain, and see the land what it is, and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many.

So they went up and searched the land, and came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff ; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs.

And they returned from searching of the land after forty days.

And they came to Moses and to Aaron, and all the congregation, and said unto them, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey ; and this is the fruit of it.

Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great : and moreover, we saw the children of Anak there.

The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south ; and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains : and the Canaanites dwell by the Sea, and by the coast of Jordan.

And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said,

Let us go up at once, and possess it ; for we are well able to overcome it.

But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.

And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched, unto the children of Israel, saying, The land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof ; and all the people that we saw in it, are men of a great stature.

And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants : and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried ; and the people wept that night.

And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses, and against Aaron : and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt, or would God we had died in this wilderness.

And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should be a prey ? were it not better for us to return into Egypt ?

And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

And Moses said unto them, Dread not ; neither be afraid of them.

The LORD your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes :

And

And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the LORD thy GOD bare thee as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came to this place.

Who went in the way before you to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night to shew you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day.

And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes.

And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land.

If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us ; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land ; for they are bread for us : their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us : fear them not.

But all the congregation bade stone them with stones : and the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation, before all the children of Israel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It seems, that the people distrusted the LORD, and preferred the witness of men to the witness of GOD Himself ; in consequence of which, they formed a scheme to satisfy themselves whether the land of Canaan was really worth the pains of conquest or not.

Though it is not expressly mentioned, it appears, that Moses consulted the will of the LORD, who permitted him to indulge the wishes of the people.

The

The crime of the spies was not falsehood, but disbelief of God's promises. It was very true, that the inhabitants of the country were such as they described ; but the LORD had promised to send His fear before his people *, to go up in the midst of them †, and assured them, that their enemies, however formidable, should fall before them ; that five of them should be able to chase an hundred ; and an hundred of them put ten thousand to flight ‡ : they should therefore have reposed entire confidence in His Almighty aid, and not have compared themselves to *grasshoppers* ; for, supposing that their natural force was as unequal to that of the enemy they were to encounter, as the spies represented, they had seen that, under the conduct of their heavenly King, even an army of *grasshoppers* § was irresistible by a powerful and warlike nation.

In what an amiable light do Moses and Aaron appear grieving for the wickedness of the Israelites, and endeavouring to awaken in their minds, those sentiments of gratitude so justly due to their Divine Conductor !

Caleb and Joshua gave an eminent example of faith ; and we shall find, that it did not lose its reward of the people. The arguments they employed to still the tumult, were perfectly just and reasonable ; for what is the most mighty nation, when their *defence* is departed from them ? And who can overcome those, whose God is the LORD : and whom He hath chosen for his own inheritance ?

It was very wicked in the spies to distrust the power of God, and disbelieve the divine promises themselves ; and they greatly increased their guilt by imparting their

* Exod. xxiii. 27. † Ibid. xxxiii. 14. ‡ Lev. xxvi. 8.

§ Alluding to the plague of locusts in Egypt.

doubts and fears to others ; crimes of a similar nature are too often committed by Christians, nay even by those who profess to instruct others. They read the Scriptures with prejudiced minds, resolved beforehand to believe nothing but what they can fully understand by their own unassisted reason ; and for want of humility become blind to the truth, and conceive doubts, which they communicate to the world ; and lead many a one into a distrust of God's promises respecting the kingdom of Heaven ; but we should remember that it is our duty to believe all that is revealed, and promised in Scripture.

SECTION XIV.

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE ISRAELITES, AND THE
DEATH OF THE SPIES.

From Numbers, Chap. xiv.

AND the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me ? And how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them ?

I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation, and mightier than they.

And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear it (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them).

And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land ; for they have heard that thou, LORD, art among this people, that thou, LORD, art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day-time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.

Now

Now if thou shalt kill all this people, as one man ; then the nations which have heard the fame of thee, will speak, saying, Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.

And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my LORD be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying,

The LORD is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty* : visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth *generation*.

Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt, even until now.

And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word : But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.

Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice ; Surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me, see it ; But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully ; him will I bring into the land whereinto he went ; and his seed shall possess it.

To-morrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness, by the way of the Red sea.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, and unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation which murmur against me ? I have heard the murmurings

murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.

Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upwards, which have murmured against me.

Doubtless ye shall not come into the land concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.

But as for you, your carcasses they shall fall in this wilderness.

And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years.

I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.

And the men which Moses sent to search the land, died by the plague before the LORD, but Joshua and Caleb lived still.

And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly.

And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned.

And Moses said, Wherefore now do you transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper.

Go

Go not up, for the LORD is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies.

For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD; therefore the LORD will not be with you.

But they presumed to go up unto the hill-top: nevertheless, the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses departed not out of the camp.

Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

There is great reason to suppose, that when the Glory of the LORD appeared, Moses approached the Tabernacle, to learn the Divine will.

The offence, which the people had committed, in resolving to quit the guidance of the LORD, and elect a captain for themselves, that they might return to Egyptian bondage, instead of taking possession of the land he had designed for them, was an open act of rebellion against their Heavenly King: the men, who were guilty of it, forfeited every privilege, which, as His people, they might have claimed, and Divine justice was provoked to cut them off. An utter end would now have been put to the whole nation, had not the LORD in his infinite mercy resolved, that the intercession of their mediator should prevail. That Moses might have an opportunity of pleading for Israel, the LORD informed him of the impending judgments. Moses, knowing the *way of the LORD*, and that, though
He

He would not clear the guilty without atonement and intercession, He would pardon iniquity and sin* and that He was merciful and gracious, had recourse to the argument he used once before, and entreated the LORD, for the honour of His own great name, not to extirpate His people. The LORD, according to the greatness of His mercy, spared the *nation*, as Moses requested; but pronounced a just sentence on that generation, which had offended His Divine Majesty. They were excluded from the land they had despised, and condemned to die in the wilderness; and the spies, who had been the first instigators of the sedition, were killed by the pestilence, to strike terror into the rest, and shew from what a fate they were delivered. But the LORD, mindful of His Covenant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, transferred the blessing to the younger part of their posterity.

The people now began to think of the value of the land they had lost; but their repentance came too late; and though they were eager to obtain it, their utmost efforts could not succeed, for the LORD refused His aid.

The royal Psalmist taught his subjects how to apply this portion of Scripture to themselves†. “To day (says he) if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness, when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work; unto whom I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest.”—And the Apostle to the Hebrews shews, that it is equally applicable to Christians‡.

The Israelites turned their backs on the land of Canaan, and undervalued the blessings of Providence; on which account they were deservedly excluded from the

* Exod. xxxiv. 7.

† Psalm xcv.

‡ Heb. iii. 7.

possession

possession of them.—If their case was deplorable, who forfeited an *earthly inheritance*, what will that of Christians be, if they lose an *eternal* one? The LORD, it is true, is gracious and merciful, long suffering, and of great goodness; but He will withdraw His favour at last from us also, if we despise it; and, without His assisting Grace, our spiritual enemies will conquer us, as the Amalekites conquered the disobedient Israelites; let us therefore, as the Apostle advises—* ‘Take heed that there be not in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God; but let us exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.’

SECTION XV.

THE SABBATH-BREAKER STONED—THE DEATH OF KORAH, DATHAN, AND ABIRAM.

MOSES has not transmitted to us any account of a number of events, which must have happened during the Israelites wandering in the wilderness; for they were not to be recorded, as the generation they related to were blotted out from the inheritance of Canaan; but there were some very striking incidents, which afford lessons of general instruction, these he has preserved, and we will not pass them over.

The Israelites had been repeatedly commanded to keep the Sabbath-day holy; and we have reason to believe, that they complied, at least outwardly, with the ordinances of God, while they wandered in the wilderness; for, we read, that, during that period, a man was

* Heb. iii. 12, 13.

found gathering sticks on the Sabbath-day* ; those who caught him in the fact, knew not what course to take, they therefore brought him before Moses and Aaron and all the congregation ; as this was the first offence of the kind, it was thought proper to commit him to prison, till the will of the LORD was enquired ; the result of the enquiry was, that the offender should be put to death : he was accordingly carried without the camp, and stoned with stones till he died †. A young man, who blasphemed the name of the LORD, and cursed, was punished in the same manner.

The distinguishing honour which it had pleased GOD, for the good of the people in general, to confer on Moses and Aaron, occasioned envy in the minds of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram : the first was a near relation to Moses ‡. These seditious persons aspired to those holy offices to which the LORD had appointed Moses and Aaron ; and were desirous to overturn the government, in order to assume equal power with GOD's ordained ministers ; by their artful insinuations, they inflamed the minds of many others, who are said to have been *men of renown*, who ought therefore to have entertained nobler sentiments. Their number amounted to two hundred and fifty princes, who assembled together and severely reproached Moses and Aaron, for exalting themselves above the rest of the congregation, accusing them of arrogance and injustice.

Moses was so greatly affected with their impiety to GOD, and unkindness to those who had laboured, with unremitting care, for their welfare, that he fell on his face before them ; expressing by this action both sorrow and humility ; he calmly remonstrated with them, and

* Numb. xv. 32. † Lev. xxiv. 10. ‡ Numb. xvi. 1.

desired that they would leave the *proof* to God ; requiring them to attend on the morrow, each man with his censer in his hand. They readily acceded to his proposal, and departed. One would naturally suppose, that as Moses had given them so many hours for reflection, they would have recollected how improper their behaviour was, and declined the trial ; but instead of doing so, they employed the intermediate time in persuading all the congregation to support their claim, and at the appointed hour appeared with censers in their hands, attended by those ungrateful Israelites, who seem to have gladly seized every opportunity of expressing their murmurs and discontent.

As soon as they were come to the door of the tabernacle, and the princes had laid incense on their censers, the GLORY OF THE LORD appeared, and GOD commanded Moses and Aaron to *separate* themselves, that he might in a moment destroy the impious multitude ; but these good men fell on their faces, and intreated the LORD to spare the nation. The LORD graciously heard their prayer, but caused the earth to open, and swallow up alive Korah, Dathan, and Abiram : and fire came out of the ground, which destroyed those men who dared to appear before the ALMIGHTY in such a cause, and all who belonged to them.

The people were struck with the utmost consternation, expecting to share their fate ; but the Divine compassion interposed in their behalf, and they were only commanded to preserve the censers ; which were, as a memorial of this wonderful event, afterwards made a covering for the altar.

The behaviour of Moses and Aaron, on this trying occasion, was truly amiable, for they did not suffer private resentment to operate in the least : without doubt,

doubt, they made use of every argument to remove the unjust suspicion of the people, and then implored the LORD to turn their hearts ; but, as they were so pious, and entertained the highest veneration for the SUPREME BEING, it was natural to desire that GOD might give some signal proof that the priesthood was really of Divine institution ; otherwise there would have been perpetual commotions in the congregation, and the honour of GOD would have been continually insulted.

It is shocking to read of the folly and ingratitude of the Israelites* ; but we are told that, on the very next morning, the congregation which had been so graciously delivered by the mercy of GOD, at the intercession of Moses and Aaron, once more assembled with clamour and reproach : accusing them for having (as they said) slain the people of the LORD. The GLORY OF THE LORD again shone forth in vindication of his insulted servants, who, far from wishing for the destruction of these inconsiderate wretches, as soon as they perceived that a plague was begun, had immediate recourse to the ordinance which GOD had appointed as a means of reconciliation : Aaron, by the desire of Moses, took a censer with some of the holy fire from the altar, and made an atonement for them ; and the LORD graciously rewarded their benevolent purposes, by granting them the heart-felt delight, which those exalted minds must necessarily feel, who can *pray for those who despitefully use them, and return good for evil.*

It pleased GOD to appoint another monument, to commemorate the contest between His ministers and these pretenders to the priesthood. He spake unto

* Numb. xvi. 41.

† Numb. xvii.

Moses,

Moses, that he should command the chief princes of Israel, or heads of tribes, to bring each man a rod, with the name of his tribe written upon it. And the Levites were required to write the name of Levi upon their rod.

As soon as they were collected, Moses, by Divine direction, laid the rods before the LORD in the tabernacle; and, to his great astonishment, when he went to look at them in the morning he found, that the rod of Levi had put forth buds and blossoms, and even yielded almonds. Moses immediately brought them forth, and exhibited the miracle to all the people. There is no doubt, but sufficient care was taken to prevent collusion, and that every one had marked his stick or rod, so as to be able to know it again; they could not therefore dispute the decision, which was so evidently in favour of Aaron. GOD gave command, that from that day none but the sons of Aaron should presume to come into the tabernacle on pain of death.

How graciously kind and condescending was GOD to this stubborn people! giving them continual proofs of his power and providence, and ordaining memorials, both of his judgments and mercies, to remain for the satisfaction of succeeding generations.

The rod of Aaron was preserved in the Ark, or laid up by it, for a number of years, and certainly was to be seen at the time Moses wrote his history.

The people were so affected with this last miracle, that they fell from presumption to despair, and expressed apprehensions that, if they approached the Tabernacle, they should die; not considering, that those who perished, brought destruction on themselves, excepting indeed the *children* of the men who were swallowed up alive; but we must remember, that they would have been in a very helpless situation, had they survived their parents;

parents ; and as they died *innocent*, there is no doubt but Divine goodness removed them to a happier state.

Suitable reflections upon this Section will naturally arise from the punishment of the men who broke the Sabbath, and of those who dishonoured the priesthood.

SECTION XVI.

MOSES AND AARON OFFEND THE LORD BY STRIKING
THE ROCK.

From Numb. Chap. xx.

THEN came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin, in the first month : and the people abode in Kadesh ; and Miriam died there : and was buried there.

And there was no water for the congregation ; and they gathered themselves together against Moses, and against Aaron.

And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD.

And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there ?

And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place ? it is no place of seed, of figs, of vines, or of pomegranates, neither is there any water to drink.

And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly, unto the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces : and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou

and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes, and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock : so thou shalt give the congregation, and their beasts drink.

And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him.

And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear, now, ye rebels : must we fetch you water out of this rock ?

And Moses lift up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice : and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.

And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel ; therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

This is the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel strove with the LORD : and he was sanctified in them.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It was now the fortieth year after the departure of the Israelites out of the land of Egypt ; and they were once more drawing towards the land of promise. They abode in Kadesh, not Kadesh-Barnea, which was on the borders of Canaan ; but another Kadesh on the confines of Edom ; farther off from the land of Canaan, but in the way to it from the Red-sea, to which they had been hurried back.

The greatest number of those persons, who came out of

of the land of Egypt, were dead ; we are therefore to consider this and the succeeding part of the history, as relating to the next generation (their children), to whom the LORD had transferred the inheritance of the promised land, of which he was about to put them in possession.

It was the duty of Moses and Aaron, as the Ministers of GOD, to follow the Divine commands with the exactest punctuality ; but, instead of *speaking* to the rock in the name of the LORD, Moses *struck* it. This action had a direct tendency to dishonour GOD in the eyes of the people ; for Moses did not even mention His Holy Name, but seemed desirous to take the glory to himself and his brother,—*Must we fetch water out of this rock, ye rebels?* and Aaron appears to have agreed with him in sentiment. And, we find, that they not only disobeyed the commands of the LORD, but on this occasion, disbelieved His promises. Perhaps Moses and Aaron imagined they should never obtain the rest they had lived in expectation of finding in the land of Canaan : of this we may be certain, that both their thoughts and actions were very sinful, or the LORD would not have punished them so severely. Moses, who relates the transaction, does not attempt to exculpate himself, and makes no complaint of injustice done him ; with his usual meekness, he yielded to the Divine will, and resolved to regulate his future conduct, by a steadfast regard to the honour of GOD ; and we may be certain, that the Almighty recompensed him for his disappointment of an earthly Canaan, by hopes of a better rest in a world to come, or he could not have sustained himself as he did, in a variety of subsequent trials. Had the LORD passed over this offence, it would have shewed Him to be a *respector of persons* *, which the Scripture assures us He is not.

* Acts x. 34.

In this part of Sacred History we have a very affecting instance of the weakness of human nature, which should teach us to have a constant guard on our own hearts. If those faithful servants, Moses and Aaron, who made the law of God the general rule of their actions, erred in some particular instances, to what a height of wickedness will those arrive, who totally disregard it!

SECTION XVII.

THE DEATH OF AARON.

FOR a number of years, the Israelites moved about from place to place in the deserts of Arabia, but chiefly about the mountains of Idumea, till almost all that generation of men, which came out of Egypt, were dead : at length the camp came to Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin ; and Miriam died and was buried there.

* While they remained in this place, Moses sent messengers unto the King of Edom, entreating that he would consider the Israelites as brethren, and permit them to pass through his land ; assuring him, that the people would do no kind of injury to the fields and vineyards, or commit any hostilities, but march quietly along the king's highway, till they had passed the borders of Edom. This message Moses sent in consequence of a command which he had received from the LORD, who, having destined Mount Seir as a possession to the descendants of Esau, would not permit the descendants of Jacob to supplant them.

* Numb. xx. 14.

The King of Edom, so far from complying with the reasonable request of Moses, came out against the Israelites with a powerful army; on which the latter, agreeably to the will of God, took another route, and soon after encamped at mount Hor, not far from the borders of Edom. By thus opposing the Israelites, the Edomites shewed, that the old enmity of Esau to Jacob was transmitted to their posterity. The time was not yet come, at which the descendants of the *elders* were to serve the *younger* *; therefore the Israelites were enjoined not to annoy the Edomites.

† When they were settled in mount Hor, the Lord gave notice to Aaron of his approaching death, informing him, that, on account of his late disobedience, he should not enter into the land of Canaan: and soon after God commanded Moses to take Aaron and Eleazar his son to the top of the mount, and there to strip Aaron of his priestly garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son. Moses accordingly went up the mountain with Aaron and Eleazar, in the sight of the whole congregation, and did as the Lord required; and Aaron died on mount Hor. The loss of their High Priest was a great affliction to the people, and they bewailed his death, with the usual solemnities, for thirty days. Aaron was buried by Eleazar his son in some cave on mount Hor; but the place of his interment was kept from the knowledge of the Israelites; perhaps from an apprehension that, in after ages, they might pay some superstitious worship to him; or probably to prevent his remains from being removed by the Arabians, among whom they then dwelt. Aaron was an hundred and twenty-three years old when he died on mount Hor.

* Gen. xxv. 23.

† Numb. xx. 22.

It must have been a very painful and affecting office to Moses to strip his beloved brother of the sacred vestments, and afterwards to witness his death, and assist at his interment; and we can scarcely suppose, that the LORD GOD, *gracious* and *merciful*, would have called him to such a trial, without supporting his mind under it, by assurances that he should meet Aaron again in a better world; neither could Aaron have gone through the awful solemnity of resigning the priesthood and his life, with calmness and resignation, if he had been devoid of similar expectations; for these are the only comforts that can possibly reconcile the mind to approaching death, and the loss of beloved friends: supported by these, the departing spirit looks forward to the joys of futurity; and the surviving mourner submits without repining, to the will of Heaven.

Aaron, on the whole, acquitted himself in the holy office, to which he was appointed by GOD, with great propriety; for, excepting in the matter of the golden calf, when he suffered his inclination to be over ruled by the idolaters through fear, and in the instance of disbelieving the LORD's promise, when Moses struck the rock, we read of no act of disobedience that he was guilty of. The Author of the book Ecclesiasticus bears honourable testimony to his character; and teaches us to venerate his memory, as one who was chosen by Divine command out of all men living to offer sacrifices to the LORD, incense and a sweet savour, and to make reconciliation for his people *. How merciful was the LORD, in continuing the priesthood and sacrifices, even after the *nation* had so highly offended Him. By this means every *individual*, who composed the *generation* He in His just anger excluded from Canaan, had an op-

* Eccclus. xlv.

portunity of expressing his repentance, and of being reconciled to his GOD, so as to obtain, through His infinite mercy, an interest in the promises of an eternal inheritance *, to be fulfilled after the Mediator of the New Covenant should have made atonement for the sins of the whole world.

SECTION XVIII.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT SET UP IN THE WILDERNESS.

From Numb. Chap. xxi.

And when King Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies ; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners.

And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities.

And the LORD hearkened unto the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites : and they utterly destroyed them and their cities : and he called the name of the place Hormah.

And they journeyed from mount Hor, by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom : and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.

And the people spake against GOD, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness ? for there is no bread, neither is there any water ; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

* Heb. ix. 15.

And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people : and they bit the people and much people of Israel died.

Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee ; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us : And Moses prayed for the people.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole : and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole : and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though it was thirty-eight years since the spies were sent into the land of Canaan, the remembrance of them remained ; and, without doubt, the inhabitants had been, from that time, suspicious that an attack would be made on them by the Israelites : they therefore immediately took the alarm, when they found that the people advanced by the very road the spies had taken, and it appeared necessary to repulse them in time. Most likely, it was to try the *faith* of the Israelites, that some of them were permitted to fall into the hands of Arad ; and to shew them, that humility and repentance would restore them to the divine favour, God blessed them with success, when they addressed themselves to him as became their condition.

The wilderness, through which the people were at that time passing, was greatly infested with winged serpents,

pents, very venomous creatures, whose bite occasioned a pain like the burning of fire, which generally proved mortal. The great CREATOR, who has power over all the works of his hands, restrained them from hurting His people, till they became quite insensible of His mercies; and then He sent these serpents to sting them, as a judgment upon them; but as soon as they confessed their sin, the LORD had compassion on them, and appointed a mean by which they might testify their faith, and be preserved from the dreadful effects of this visitation. The very extraordinary method which God took to relieve the people, shewed, that their recovery was His work. It was not by the application of herbs or mollifying plaisters, that they were restored to health; neither were they saved by the thing that they saw, but by Him who is the Saviour of all*. The brazen serpent was a sign of salvation, to put them in mind of the Covenant of God. His adopted sons were chastised for their sins, that they might remember His commands; but when they turned unto their God with *repentance* and *faith*, the teeth even of venomous serpents could not destroy them; for His mercy was ever over them, and they were quickly saved.

We are taught by our LORD Himself, to consider the brazen serpent as a type of the Saviour of the world. 'As Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, (said He) so must the *Son of Man* be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life †.'

How frequently does it happen, that Christians, who are taught to consider themselves as journeying to a place of everlasting rest, are discouraged by the difficulties they meet with in the way! Sometimes they

* Wisdom xvi.

† John iii. 14, 15.

are even tempted to murmur against Providence, and to despise and undervalue the blessings which are actually in their possession, because they have not every thing they desire. In mercy to them, the LORD sends chastisements upon them, to awaken their minds to a sense of their duty. They confess their sin, and GOD takes compassion on them ; but He *does not clear the guilty**. They must, therefore, look up to the *Cross of CHRIST* for pardon : the blood, which was shed on that, has made atonement for the sins of the whole world ; and nothing farther is required to secure the salvation of each individual, but their own sincere repentance, and a lively faith in GOD's mercy through CHRIST.

SECTION XIX.

THE AMORITES DESTROYED.

THE Israelites continued their marches between the countries of Moab and Ammon, without committing any hostilities ; for such was the will of the LORD. As they were now become patient, GOD was pleased to afford them a miraculous supply of water from the sandy ground ; at length they came to the country of the Amorites† ; from hence Moses sent ambassadors to Sihon their king, demanding a passage through his dominions, and offering to pay for the supplies he and his people should afford to the Israelites, without giving him the least disturbance : but Sihon refused, and immediately collected his forces together, to oppose the Israelites. A battle ensued, and the Israelites obtained a complete victory, seized on the country, and killed the king and all the inhabitants. Soon after

* Exod. xxxiv. 7.

† Numb. xxi. 21.

this, Og the king of Bashan, a man of gigantic stature, in attempting to obstruct their passage, underwent the same fate ; for the Israelites took possession of his country, and utterly destroyed the inhabitants, reserving only the cattle and spoil of the cities for themselves.

We may be certain, that these kings and their subjects were abandoned to wickedness, or the LORD would not have permitted the Israelites to cut them off. GOD doubtless knew that they would refuse Moses the peaceable terms he offered ; but permitted him to propose them, perhaps partly to satisfy the mind of Moses, and partly to shew that the people deserved the fate to which they were condemned by Divine justice.

When the LORD made a Covenant with Abraham, to give to his posterity the country of the Amorites, &c. He told him that they would not be put into possession of it till the expiration of four hundred years* ; and gave for a reason for this delay, that *the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full* ; meaning that they had not attained to such a height of wickedness, as to provoke GOD to cut them off from the face of the earth : we may therefore conclude, that when the Israelites were allowed to extirpate them, the iniquity of the Amorites *was* full, and that the former were the instruments of Divine vengeance against them. The Israelites had an hereditary right to the land of the Amorites, after the extirpation of these people in virtue of the Divine grant made to Abraham : and their being put in possession of it, was a proof of the truth of GOD's promises.

* See Section xvii. vol. i.

SECTION XX.

BALAK KING OF MOAB SENDETH FOR THE PROPHET
BALAAM TO CURSE ISRAEL.

From Numb. Chap. xxii.

AND the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab, on this side Jordan by Jericho.

And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.

And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many: and Moab was distressed, because of the children of Israel.

And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time.

He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor, to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me.

Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people, for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest, is blessed, and he whom thou cursest, is cursed.

And the elders of Moab, and the elders of Midian departed, with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak.

And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and
I will

I will bring you word again as the LORD shall speak unto me. And the princes of Moab abode with Balaam.

And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee?

And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, saying, Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth: come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out.

And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them, thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed.

And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get ye into your land: for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you.

And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us.

And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they.

And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak, the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me:

For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: Come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people.

And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more.

Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more.

And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him,

him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them ; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.

And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

And GOD's anger was kindled because he went : and the angel of the LORD stood in the way, for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him.

And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand : and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field : and Balaam smote the ass to turn her into the way.

But the angel of the LORD stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side.

And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall : And he smote her again.

And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.

And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.

And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times ?

And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me ; I would there were a sword in mine hand ; for now would I kill thee.

And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine, unto this day ? was I ever wont to do so unto thee ? And he said, Nay.

Then

Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand : and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.

And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times ? behold I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me.

And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times : unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.

And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD, I have sinned ; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me ; now therefore if it displease thee, I will get me back again.

And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, Go with the men : but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak,

And when Balak heard that Balaam was come, he went out to meet him, unto a city of Moab, which is in the border of Arnon, which is in the utmost coast.

And Balak said unto Balaam, Did I not earnestly send unto thee, to call thee ? Wherefore camest thou not unto me ? Am I not able indeed to promote thee to honour ?

And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee : have I now any power at all to say any thing ? the word that GOD putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak.

And Balaam went with Balak, and they came unto Kirjath-huzoth.

And Balak offered oxen and sheep, and sent to Balaam, and to the princes that were with him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Moabites were descended from Moab, one of the sons of Lot. They retained the worship of the true GOD among them till the time of Moses, but had corrupted their religion by mixing the worship of idols with it; they paid adoration in particular to Baal-Peor, supposed by some to be an image of the Sun; *Baal* signifies LORD, *Peor* the place where his temple was.

The Midianites (as we have before observed) descended from one of the sons of Abraham, by his wife Keturah. We find from the scriptures, that in the days of Moses, sacrifices were offered to the LORD GOD in the southern parts of Midian, for Jethro was priest there, but in the northern territories all kinds of abominations were practised.

The Midianites were very numerous, sometimes they mixed with the Ishmaelites*, and at others united with the Moabites; some of them were shepherds, who moved their tents, and drove their cattle before them, even in times of war; others were merchants who acquired immense riches; and, by exchanging their gold and jewels with their brethren, for flocks and herds, enriched them also.

Moses had received no commission to attack either the Moabites or the Midianites, therefore he would not have molested them; but it appears that these two nations had great dread of the Israelites.

It was a superstitious custom in use amongst the heathens †, to present gifts to magicians for pronouncing curses on their enemies, in the names of their idols, at

* See Section lvi. vol. i.

† Patrick's Commentaries.

the beginning of a war, which they thought would insure them victory. All nations had heard of the wonders performed by the God of Israel; and it seems, that Balaam was a Prophet, who had on some occasions been inspired by the LORD, to utter predictions which had been remarkably accomplished. Balak therefore thought, that if Balaam could be induced to invoke *his* God to curse Israel, that people would be intimidated from molesting the Moabites, and would depart in search of other conquests; or that the LORD *Himself* might be prevailed on to assist that nation whose cause *His Prophet* espoused. Balaam was a very covetous man, and was tempted by these rewards to desire to *curse* those, who he knew were God's peculiar people; and instead of dismissing the messengers of Balak with assurances, that the PROPHET of the HOLY GOD despised all *worldly* riches and honours, he *enquired of the* LORD; which in the present case was very impious, because God's purposes, in respect to Israel, had been already *revealed*; and Balaam well knew that, unless they provoked their Heavenly KING by disobedience, no nation *could* prevail against them.

It is evident that Balaam regretted his having been forbidden to go to Balak, for when other messengers were sent, he discovered a strong inclination to attend them, notwithstanding the LORD's former interdiction. Though it was not the Divine Will that he should go, *at the first*, the LORD permitted him to accompany the messengers the second time, commanding him, however, to speak those words only that he should put in his mouth. Balaam ought therefore to have immediately laid aside all mercenary views, and to have resolved to perform the office of a prophet *willingly*, but he loved the wages of unrighteousness*, and deter-

* 2 Pet. ii. 15.

mined to gain them if possible : he accordingly set off on his journey, and, it is likely, revolved in his mind as he rode along, how he should turn to his own profit the Divine Revelation he expected to receive on his arrival in the land of Moab. God, it is true, commanded him to go with the messengers of Balak, but not to *curse Israel*, yet this was Balaam's purpose, *therefore the LORD's anger was kindled because he went.*

Balaam seems to have been one of that kind of men, who have no regard to the feelings of the brute creation. The text says, that he went with the princes of Moab ; but we find, that he was afterwards attended only by two of his own servants ; therefore it is not unlikely, that, impatient to accomplish his journey, he got before them, and urged his ass to make greater speed than was consistent with the nature of so slow an animal ; and that he would have gone on till he had ridden her to death ; for we cannot suppose, that the *Angel of the LORD* would have raised terror in a creature which was undoubtedly the object of Divine compassion, but with a view to the preservation of its life.

This poor ass was an old and steady servant ; so that when she turned aside into a field, he might have supposed there was some extraordinary cause for her quitting the road ; and he should have tried to get her back by gentle means : instead of this, he had recourse to blows : and the more her terror increased, the greater was his rage and cruelty towards this poor creature, which had carried him with ease and safety many a fatiguing journey, and which had never before been disobedient to his will. Nay, to such an extreme did he suffer his anger to rise, that he was not even affected with the uncommon circumstance of her *speaking to him*. The reply which Balaam made to his ass, when she first addressed him, was a very foolish one ; for in what could
a crea-

a creature, hitherto dumb, have *mocked* him? How barbarous was his wish, that he had a sword in his hand to kill her! There was something extremely pathetic in her subsequent expostulation; and the LORD directed it to his heart, and his awakened conscience acknowledged the justice of the remonstrance which the ass had uttered. It was now Balaam's turn to feel the terror he would not pity. What must have been his remorse, when he found, that, by turning out of the road, the ass had saved his life? He now perceived, that not only his *covetousness*, but his *cruelty*, was displeasing to the LORD; he therefore offered to forego his wicked purpose of gaining the proffered rewards from the King of Moab, but the LORD commanded him to pursue his journey, and again repeated his injunction, to speak the words of Divine inspiration only.

It seems that when Balaam arrived in Moab, his mind retained those impressions which the Divine vision was calculated to make upon it. He feared to offend the LORD; and he candidly declared to Balak, that he had no power of himself to do any thing in the affair, which that monarch had so greatly at heart; but he was still loth entirely to relinquish the promised recompense; he therefore went with Balak, and, it is supposed, instructed him in the mode of sacrificing to the GOD of Israel, in hopes that the LORD might become propitious to Moab, and comply with the king's desire.

It is needless to say, that, as a prophet of the true GOD, Balaam acted a very wicked part; but as many people in the world suppose the animal creation to be abandoned entirely to their will, it may be proper to remark, that his behaviour to his ass was deemed *sinful*. Surely the reflection that GOD observes our treatment
of

of brutes, and that he once publicly espoused the cause of a creature, which is regarded as one of the most despicable in the creation, should restrain us from riding or driving any beyond their natural strength; should induce us to consider the great utility of beasts, and incline us to exercise patience towards them, and make allowances for their want of speech and reason. What Balaam's ass said to him, might with strict propriety be addressed to many an inhuman rider and driver, by their injured animals; but, alas, beasts are *dumb*, and their owners void of humanity! May it then be the endeavour of all those, who are entrusted with the education of children, to impress their infant minds with ideas of the usefulness of brutes, and with a sense of the duty of mercy towards them!

SECTION XXI.

BALAAM AND BALAK OFFER SACRIFICES.—BALAAM
BY GOD'S COMMAND BLESSETH ISRAEL.

AND it came to pass on the morrow, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost part of the people.

And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen, and seven rams.

And Balak did as Balaam had spoken; and Balak and Balaam offered on every altar a bullock and a ram.

And Balaam said unto Balak, Stand by thy burnt-offering, and I will go; peradventure the LORD will come to meet me, and whatsoever he sheweth me, I will tell thee. And he went to an high place.

And God met Balaam; and he said unto him, I have
prepared

prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram.

And the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak.

And he returned unto him, and lo, he stood by his burnt sacrifice, he, and all the princes of Moab.

And he took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.

How shall I curse, whom GOD hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the LORD hath not defied?

For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.

Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!

And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and behold, thou hast blessed them altogether.

And Balaam answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the LORD hath put in my mouth?

And Balak said unto him, Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them: thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and thou shalt not see them all: and curse me them from thence.

And he brought him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar.

And Balaam said unto Balak, Stand here by thy burnt-offering, while I meet the LORD yonder.

And

And the LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Go again unto Balak, and say thus.

And when he came to him, behold, he stood by his burnt-offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said unto him, What hath the LORD spoken?

And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor:

GOD is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

Behold, I have received commandment to bless; and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it.

He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel, the LORD his GOD is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.

GOD brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.

Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel; according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath GOD wrought?

Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion; he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.

And Balak said unto Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all.

But Balaam answered and said unto Balak, Told not I thee, saying, All that the LORD speaketh, that I must do?

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It may reasonably be inferred, from the numerous sacrifices which Balaam directed Balak to offer, that he entertained

entertained hopes of drawing the favour of the LORD from the Israelites to the Moabites ; but it pleased God to disappoint the unjust designs of the king and the mercenary views of the prophet.

The expression, *Balaam took up his parable*, signifies, that he spake what the LORD inspired him to utter. Balaam certainly had, at this time, a strong Divine impulse on him ; the power of the LORD, which had lately been displayed in enabling an animal, naturally dumb, to speak distinct words, and hold rational converse, was now exhibited in obliging him to speak against his inclination, in favour of Israel ; which, if properly considered, was as great a miracle as the former, and such as none but the great Being, who created the organs of speech, could have effected.

The unfaithful prophet was now sensible, and compelled to confess, that it was in vain to oppose the Divine will ; and it was made known through him, that under the guidance and protection of the LORD, the nation which (for the sake of a paltry reward) he had wished to *curse*, should be separated from all other nations, and that it should multiply and prosper upon earth, to an astonishing degree ; and not only so, but that the *righteous* Israelites should be encouraged to hope for a felicity beyond the grave, which would disarm death of its terrors.

It is evident, that Balaam had a desire to curse Israel ; and that he thought it possible to conciliate the favour of the LORD towards the Moabites, by repeated sacrifices ; for when he returned to Balak the second time, he was inspired to inform him, that God was unchangeable in his Divine counsels, and not to be diverted from his purposes, like variable man ; which implies, that they had both entertained a different idea of the Deity.

It seems strange, that Balaam should say by Divine inspiration,

inspiration, that *GOD had not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither had he seen perverseness in Israel* ; when it appears from the preceding part of the history, that the Israelites were remarkable for their rebellious disposition. The meaning appears to be, that, as a *nation*, they had not arrived at such a degree of wickedness, as to provoke *GOD* to curse them, or give them up as a prey to their enemies ; on the contrary, the *LORD GOD* Himself vouchsafed to dwell among them as their *KING*, and did not approve of enchantments and divinations being employed against them.

The subsequent part of the prophecy foretold the future conquests of the Israelites. The king of Moab, fearful that he should hear a prediction against his own nation in particular, interrupted the prophet, and for a time relinquished his desire of having them accursed.

What Balaam foretold, respecting the worldly prosperity of the Israelites, was remarkably fulfilled, as we shall read in the future part of the history ; from whence we may infer, that the death of the *righteous* among them was attended with comfortable hopes respecting futurity ; for the prophet, who spake by Divine inspiration, seems to have envied them for the latter, rather than for the former blessing.

How dreadful must be the death-bed of a man who has lived in a constant course of wickedness ! “ * Imagination cannot furnish ideas strong enough to describe the misery of a sinner, who is expiring with all his senses about him : looking back on his past life with unavailing remorse ; looking forward to eternity with the expectation of intolerable torments. How different is the condition of him, who, in his last hours, has the approbation of his own conscience, and the inward consolations of the Holy Spirit ! He regards death as the

* See Bishop Sherlock's Sermon on this text.

gate of life ; he waits with patience and tranquillity for that summons, which, he trusts and believes, will call him to perpetual joys, will introduce him to the presence of his GOD and SAVIOUR, and restore him to the society of those dear relatives, who are either gone before to their heavenly rest, or, who, after their pilgrimage on earth is finished, will join him in the blest abodes."

From this slight view of the different conditions of the wicked and the righteous at the hour of death, an hour which will come to all, who would not join in Balaam's wish, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his?* If such is really our ardent desire, let us endeavour *to live the life of the righteous;* and what that is, the Scriptures will fully inform us.

SECTION XXII.

BALAM CONTINUETH TO BLESS ISRAEL—HE DE-
PARTETH FROM MOAB.

From Numb. Chap. xxiii. xxiv.

AND Balak said unto Balaam, Come, I pray thee, I will bring thee unto another place : peradventure it will please God, that thou mayest curse me them from thence.

And Balak brought Balaam unto the top of Peor, that looked towards Jeshimon.

And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks, and seven rams.

And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar.

And when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to
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bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face towards the wilderness.

And Balaam lift up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes, and the Spirit of God came upon him.

And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said :

He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open :

How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel !

As the vallies are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters.

He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.

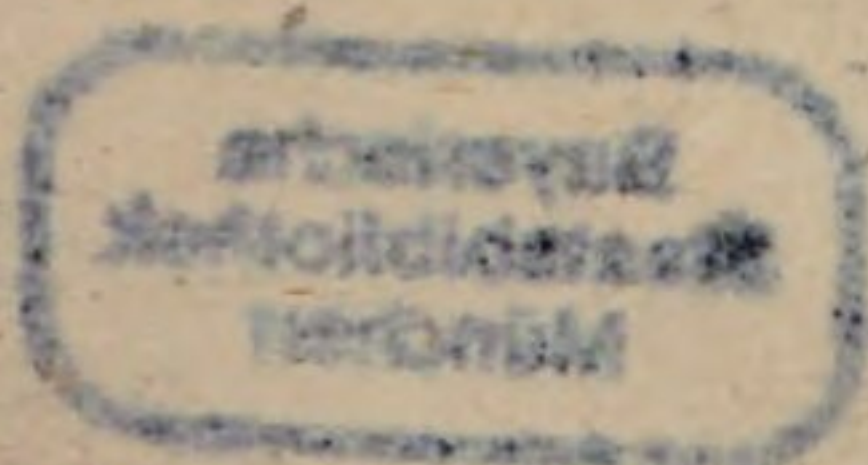
God brought him forth out of Egypt, he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn ; he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with arrows.

He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion : who shall stir him up ? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.

And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together : and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times.

Therefore now flee thou to thy place : I thought to promote thee unto great honour, but lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour.

And



And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying,

If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the LORD saith, that will I speak.

And now, behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee, what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.

And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open, hath said:

He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty falling into a trance, but having his eyes open:

I [shall see him but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies, and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.

And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall be, that he perish for ever.

And he looked on the Kenites; and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwelling place, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock.

Nevertheless, the Kenite shall be wasted until Ashur shall carry thee away captive.

And he took up his parable, and said, Alas, who shall live when God doth this!

And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim, and

shall afflict Ashur, and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish for ever.

And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place; and Balak also went his way.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The king of Moab must have had a very malignant mind to persist, as he did, in wishing to bring the curse of GOD on a people, who had not discovered the least intention of annoying him or his subjects; and it was very treacherous in Balaam to concur with this distrustful monarch, in his cruel design against those, who were entitled to the peculiar love and kindness of their own Prophet.

Balaam, having practised every art he could think of, to render the LORD propitious to his wishes, resolved, as it seems, to seek for no further inspiration from GOD, but to speak his own words, if not obliged to do otherwise; however, the SPIRIT OF THE LORD came upon him uninvoked, and he was again impelled to bless Israel, which he did in still more exalted language than before.

The general purport of his prediction was, that the Israelites should be a very powerful and flourishing people. Balak had already heard much more than he wished to hear, but he did not yet know all the LORD meant to inform him of. It certainly was a very proper punishment both to the king and the prophet, for the first to be told, and the latter to relate, what the people they had conspired together to curse would do to the Moabites, and other neighbouring nations. The confederates were now effectually divided, for the *malice* of one party was defeated, and the *covetousness* of the other disappointed;

disappointed ; so we may conclude, that they separated in anger and discontent, as is usually the case in all friendships, which are founded upon wickedness.

Balaam's prophecies shew that the people of Israel were really under the particular protection of GOD ; and the completion of them, which happened in the course of time, proved the prescience of the ALMIGHTY. Though the Israelitish nation was separated from the rest of the nations as his peculiar people, and had the LORD GOD dwelling among them, He did not entirely hide Himself from the rest of the world ; it was their idolatrous practices that kept the other nations at a distance from Him. The LORD was ever to be found by such as sought him with an *humble* and *pious* mind.

We may easily suppose, that so covetous a man as Balaam could not lose the riches he went in pursuit of to Moab, without feeling a great disappointment. He had not willingly frustrated the wishes of Balak, and as for the Israelites, he regarded them as enemies ; to be revenged on them, and to reinstate himself in the favour of the king of Moab, as we learn from another chapter, he formed a device, which it seems effected the reconciliation he sought for. It was this* ; he advised the king of Moab to send some of the Midianitish women among the Israelites, with a view to draw them to their idolatrous worship, and by this means expose them to the displeasure of GOD. This artifice succeeded, for many of them suffered themselves to be deluded by these strange women, even so far as to assist at the sacrifices which they offered to *Baal Peor*† ; and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and He commanded Moses to hang up the principal offenders. The LORD also sent a plague among the

* Numb. xxxi. 16.

† Numb. xxv. 3, 4.

people, which carried off about * 24,000 of those who had committed the great offence. At length Phineas, the son of Eleazar the priest, who was very zealous for the honour of God, slew a prince of the house of Simeon, who was a principal transgressor; for which God rewarded Phineas by stopping the plague, and giving him a promise, that as long as the priesthood lasted, it should continue in his family.

† Shortly after the plague Moses by God's command, again numbered the Israelites; and there were of men fit to bear arms, 601,730; of the Levites 23,000 males; the LORD then ordered Moses to fix the lot of each tribe, previous to their taking possession of the promised land: amongst them was not one man of those that were numbered at mount Sinai, excepting Moses himself, Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, the two faithful spies.

In a short time after Phineas had performed the action above mentioned, Moses was commanded by the LORD to make war against the Midianites with a small army; he accordingly selected 1000 men from each tribe, who, with Phineas at their head, made a great slaughter. In this battle fell the prophet Balaam, who, it is supposed, had returned to Midian, for the purpose of giving his diabolical advice to Balak; his fate, in being killed amongst the Midianites, was such as he justly deserved, and his associating with those on whom he had pronounced curses, shewed that he doubted the power of the LORD to execute, what his own mouth had been obliged to foretel.

Moses and Eleazar the priest went in procession to meet the victors, who brought the prey and the spoil unto them to be divided; when Moses discovered, that contrary to the express commanded of God, they had

* Numb. xxv. 9.

† Numb. xxvi.

saved all the women and children alive: for which Moses reprehended them, and caused all the captives to be slain immediately. This may at first sight appear an act of cruelty, but we must consider that the women were in this case the principal aggressors, and that they would certainly have introduced idolatry amongst the Israelites; and had the children been permitted to live, it is likely they would have revolted from the Israelites, and caused great confusion when they were grown up: by dying innocent they were saved from the curse of God, and he doubtless had mercy on them.

Moses, by Divine appointment, ordered the prey to be divided into two parts; one for the 12,000 who undertook the war, the other for the congregation, that is the people in general. This division extended only to such things as might be valuable in stocking the land they were going to possess; for the plate, jewels, and other articles, which each man took, he was permitted to reserve for himself.

Moses divided to each tribe its share, and then left it to the heads of the tribes to distribute amongst themselves according to their families. God was to have a tribute out of it, as a part set aside for holy purposes in acknowledgement of his sovereignty. The soldiers, however, were particularly favoured in this distribution, for out of the people's share God required one in 50; out of the soldiers' share one in 500 only. The soldiers' tribute was given to the priests, the people's portion to the Levites.

When the officers called the men by their names, there was not one missing; the people therefore offered a willing offering of costly things, in token of gratitude for the protection of Divine Providence; these were brought to the tabernacle, to be kept as memorials, that on future occasions the people might be encouraged to trust in God's merciful protection.

The Israelites took from the Midianites 675,000 sheep, 72,000 beeves, 61,000 asses. The Israelites had now got possession of the country that lay on the Midianish side of Jordan; and the tribes of Reuben and Gad, together with the half tribe of Manasseh, observing that the land was fertile and abounding in good pasturage, desired Moses to permit them to settle there, as the place was particularly commodious for them, as they had large flocks of cattle; this Moses consented to, on their promising that they would go over, and assist their brethren in the conquest of the land of Canaan.

As the people were now in the neighbourhood of Canaan, and just ready to enter upon the possession of it, Moses took this opportunity to appoint the limits of what they were to conquer, and the distribution of it by way of lot, which was committed to the future management of Joshua and Eleazar, at the head of the chiefs of each tribe; and it was settled in such a manner, that no jealousies or disputes ever happened afterwards among the people on this subject.

In the division of the country, Moses assigned forty-eight cities, together with their suburbs, for the Levites to dwell in; and ordered, that six of these should be made cities of refuge, to which the innocent *manslayer*, who had killed his neighbour by chance, might flee and live; but the *wilful* murderer was to be put to death; and Moses made it a law, that in all capital cases, no person should be convicted without two witnesses.

SECTION XXIII.

MOSES HAS A VIEW OF THE PROMISED LAND, AND APPOINTS JOSHUA AS HIS SUCCESSOR.

From Deut. Chap. xxxii. Numb. xxvii.

AND the LORD said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel.

And

And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered.

For ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes: that is the water of Meribah in Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin.

And Moses besought the LORD at that time, saying, O LORD GOD, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand; for what GOD is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might?

I pray thee let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.

But the LORD would not hear him: and the LORD said unto him, Let it suffice thee, speak no more unto me of this matter.

Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.

And Moses said, Let the LORD, the GOD of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation,

Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him:

And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: and give him a charge in their sight.

And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him,

that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient.

And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him, after the judgment of Urim, before the LORD; at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation.

And Moses did as the LORD commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation.

And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The earnest prayer which Moses made to God, that he might be permitted to enter the promised land, shews that his not being allowed to do so, was a grievous disappointment to him; but we find that the LORD, to soften it, vouchsafed to give him a sight of Canaan; strengthening his eye to take in the extensive prospect. It must have been a great consolation to Moses in his latter end, to be assured that the people would soon be in possession of such a fruitful and pleasant country; and we may reasonably suppose, that he was indulged with hopes of a more glorious prospect, and permanent possessions in Heaven, or the view of Canaan would only have served to mortify and vex him; he might have thought it hard, that he should be excluded from what had been the object of forty years toilsome pursuit; and he would have had reason to complain of the severity of the sentence he received, for the crime he committed in striking the rock.

The

The great affection which Moses entertained for the people of Israel, made him very solicitous to appoint a successor. Joshua had signalized himself by his valour and fidelity, and by his humility in ministering to, and waiting upon Moses.

Moses was commanded to lay his hands on Joshua, as a token of transferring the government to him; and, as a sign of God's granting to Joshua the assistance of his *holy spirit*. Moses is said to have put some of his *honour* upon Joshua; by which is meant, that during the short remainder of Moses' life, he should make him a kind of partner in his authority; that the people, being used to obey him whilst Moses lived, might the more willingly submit to him afterwards. Joshua received a charge to consult the high priest on all important occasions: in this particular, he was inferior to Moses, who had permission to address God himself.

Moses we find was not ambitious to advance the interest of his own family, though we read that he had sons: submission to the will of God, and a steady and fervent zeal for the honour of the Lord, and the good of the people, were the first principles of his actions.

SECTION XXIV.

MOSES' EXHORTATION TO THE ISRAELITES.

From Deut. Chap. i. and Sequel.

THESE be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel, on this side Jordan in the wilderness,

After he had slain Sihon the king of the Amorites,

which dwelt in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, which dwelt at Astaroth in Edrei.

On this side Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare this law, saying,

Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes, and unto the judgments which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD GOD of your fathers giveth you.

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your GOD, which I command you.

Your eyes have seen what the LORD did because of Baal-peor: for all the men that followed Baal-peor, the LORD thy GOD hath destroyed them from among you.

But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your GOD, are alive every one of you this day.

Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my GOD commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.

Keep therefore and do them: for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

For what nation is there so great, who hath GOD so nigh unto them, as the LORD our GOD is in all things that we call upon him for?

And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous, as all this law which I set before you this day?

Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but teach them thy sons, and thy son's sons:

Specially

Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.

And ye came near, and stood under the mountain : and the mountain burnt with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness.

And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire : ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude, only ye heard a voice.

And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments ; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.

These words the LORD spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice, and he added no more ; and he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.

And the LORD commanded me at that time, to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it.

Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves ; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire :

Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth :

And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even

even all the host of heaven, shouldst be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.

Furthermore, the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, and sware that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

But I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan : but ye shall go over, and possess that good land.

Take heed unto yourselves lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee.

For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God. When thou shalt have children, and children's children, and shalt have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD thy God, to provoke him to anger :

I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto you go over Jordan to possess it : ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.

And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you.

And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood, and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.

But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy
God,

God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice :

For the LORD thy God is a merciful God ; he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them.

For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?

Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live ?

Or hath God assayed to go, and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes ?

Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the LORD he is God ; there is none else besides him.

Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee : and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire, and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire.

And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt ;

To drive out nations from before thee, greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day.

Know

Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath; there is none else.

Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This excellent discourse is so affecting and pathetic, that one would think it could scarcely fail of making a lasting impression on the minds of the hearers.

Moses was going to leave the LORD's people to another leader; but he determined before he was taken from them, to use every mean in his power of enforcing their obedience to the law of God, and of persuading them not to forsake the LORD, or worship false Gods.

It was the practice of idolatrous nations to pay Divine honours to the various creatures which Moses enumerates; and, as the Israelites would be under the necessity in future of having a frequent intercourse with many of them, Moses warned them before hand to avoid their abominations. It certainly was very wrong for *man* to attempt to make a representation of the LORD God; but particularly so for those, who knew that there was a DIVINE IMAGE of the infinite DEITY; for Moses and the Elders had beheld Him, and the people themselves had heard His glorious voice. For them, I say, to make an image, or to adore any *creature*, would have been a direct affront to the Divine Majesty of the LORD God; and we may understand why the LORD styles Himself a *jealous* God, or one that would not suffer

fer the glory that belongs to Him alone, to be given to another, or His praise to graven images*.

Moses cautioned the people not to make to themselves any *image of God*, since it was utterly impossible to represent by any object in *nature* the great CREATOR of the Universe. Of his DIVINE IMAGE they could not form an idea, because He was hidden from them, on mount Sinai, by devouring fire and awful darkness. Even this phenomenon, the wonderful mixture of light and darkness, was so singular and astonishing, that it could not be accounted for in a natural way, neither could it be imitated by the art of man ; nay, it was beyond the power of language to describe, though the mind of each individual that beheld it, must have received perfect conviction that it was an evident token of the Presence of God ; and that none but an ALMIGHTY BEING could manifest Himself by such marks of omnipotence.

Moses observed, as a still farther confirmation that God was, in an especial manner, present on mount Sinai, that the people had heard a voice speaking out of the midst of the fire, saying, *I am the LORD thy God, &c.*

Moses fully set forth the kind of punishments that would be inflicted upon GOD's people for idolatrous practices, that they might know the dangers they would incur by apostacy ; and he was, on this occasion, a true prophet ; for the LORD chastised and forgave them, as they transgressed or offended, exactly as Moses foretold, and proved Himself to be a merciful GOD, ever mindful of His Covenant.

That the Israelites might not suppose the LORD to be a *created Being*, Moses repeatedly told that people, that the LORD is GOD in heaven above, and in earth beneath ; and that there is no other GOD beside Him.

* Isaiah xlii. 8.

To keep them from supposing that their own merits had gained the favour of GOD, Moses informed them, that it was for the sake of their progenitors, they had been selected from the rest of the nations to be his peculiar people; and exhorted them, by motives of worldly interest, as well as of duty, to keep the Divine Statutes and Commandments.

'Though this exhortation of Moses was delivered so many ages ago, it affords much valuable instruction to Christians. Let us therefore study it with attention, and practise its precepts, *that we may be a wise and understanding people; that the LORD our GOD may be nigh unto us in all that we call upon him for; that it may be well with us, and our children after us; that our days may be prolonged upon earth, and that we may be happy for ever in heaven hereafter.*

We do not indeed live among idolaters, and have few temptations to make graven images; but we have many enticements to dishonour the LORD GOD in the eyes of the world, by levelling Him, in idea, with the creatures that are the works of His hands; which those certainly do, who deny the divinity of our SAVIOUR. Let us, therefore, take heed to ourselves, lest we forget the conditions of the Christian Covenant: Let us keep in mind, that the LORD *He* is GOD, and, as such, let us honour Him ourselves, and train up our children, and our children's children, to know, and to serve Him.

SECTION XXV.

MOSES' EXHORTATION.

From Deut. Chap. v.

AND Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak

Speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep and do them.

The LORD our GOD made a covenant with us in Horeb.

The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.

The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire (I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to shew you the word of the LORD; for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount).

These words the LORD spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire*, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice; and he added no more; and he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.

And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness (for the mountain did burn with fire) that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders; And ye said, Behold, the LORD our GOD hath shewed us his glory, and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth.

Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us. If we hear the voice of the LORD our GOD any more, then we shall die.

For who is there of all flesh that hath heard the voice of the living GOD speaking out of the midst of the fire as we have, and lived?

Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our GOD shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the LORD

* The Ten Commandments.

our God shall speak unto thee ; and we will hear it, and do it.

And the LORD heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me : and the LORD said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken unto thee ; they have well said all that they have spoken.

O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children for ever ! Go say unto them, Get you into your tents again.

But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it.

Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you : ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

You shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though we cannot form an exact idea of the appearance of the Glory of the LORD on mount Sinai, nor of His voice speaking from the midst of the fire and thick darkness, we may easily conceive, that the scene was very awful and tremendous. Nothing less than this *sensible demonstration* of the presence of the Deity, would have convinced such a people as the Israelites, that the Commandments were of Divine institution ; and, indeed, there

there would have been some ground for suspicion, that Moses was the inventor of them, had not the LORD vouchsafed to speak to the people Himself: and succeeding generations would have rejected them, if the history of their Divine origin had not been recorded. We have, therefore, great reason to be thankful to GOD for affording this undeniable evidence of His existence and providence, and the certainty of Divine revelation.

It was at this time that the Israelites desired to have a *Mediator*; and this desire was approved of God, because He knew it was best for them that it should be so; for we find, that the Israelites were so greatly overcome by this wonderful display of Divine Majesty, that it was their earnest request never to behold the like again. We Christians have still more need of a *Mediator* than the Israelites had, because the LORD is not visible amongst us, as He was with them.

It is our happiness to be assured in the New Testament, that we have a most powerful one in CHRIST, who, instead of appearing to us in a glory which *we could not behold and live*, maintains an intercourse between GOD and his people *invisibly*, by means of His Holy Spirit. Let us then transfer our desires of beholding the Glory of the Supreme Being to a future state, when those who have served Him faithfully in this world, will be able to see Him, not only without pain and dread, but with tranquillity and joy.

It must have been a great encouragement to the obedience of the Israelites, to know, that GOD desired that they might always continue objects of His favour and loving-kindness. This encouragement Christians also have from the Holy Scriptures in an abundant degree.

SECTION XXVI.

MOSES' EXHORTATION CONTINUED.

From Deut. Chap. vi.

Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: that thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments which I command thee; thou, thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life, and that thy days may be prolonged.

Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.

Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

And it shall be when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee

thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not, when thou shalt have eaten, and be full; then beware lest thou forget the LORD which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; for the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you; lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.

Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah.

Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee.

And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in, and possess the good land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to cast out all thine enemies from before thee, as the LORD hath spoken.

And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God hath commanded you; then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bond-men in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt, with a mighty hand: and the LORD shewed signs and wonders, great and sore upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: and he brought us out from thence, that
he

he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers.

And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive as it is at this day.

And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This section strongly proves what has been before hinted, "That the Jewish constitution was a scheme for promoting virtue and true religion*." In respect to the extraordinary privileges which the Israelites possessed, they were highly honoured, but they were not to *rest* in them. These blessings were, in the first instance, the gift of *love* and *mercy*, without any merit on their part; but the continuance of them depended on their *obedience* and *righteousness*. It is exactly the same with Christians: The privileges we enjoy as the *Church of Christ*, are the free gift of God; but they will avail us nothing as *individuals*, unless we add *obedience* and *personal righteousness* to them, the *righteousness that cometh by Faith*.

The duties which Moses here enjoins to the Israelites are of general obligation to all, who are taken into covenant with God; they are parts of the *moral law*, which will never be abolished; let us, therefore, if we wish for peace and prosperity in this world; if we desire eternal rest and happiness in the next, "Fear the LORD our God, love Him with all our heart and soul, keep His statutes and His commandments ourselves, and teach

* See Taylor's Key to the Apostolic Writings.

them to our children ;” by taking every opportunity of conversing with them on religious subjects.

If it should please God to bless us with *prosperity*, let us be careful not to forget from whom our blessings flow ; and, above all things, let us remember our great deliverance from the *bondage of sin*, and never suffer any change of fortune to make us distrust the power or providence of God.

By *swearing in the NAME of the LORD GOD*, Moses meant, that they should confirm their covenants, whether among themselves, or with other nations, in His HOLY NAME, by solemnly calling upon the LORD GOD to witness the agreement, and to bless and prosper them, or send his judgments upon them, according as they kept their oath, or broke it ; as GOD is a GOD of truth, it is very impious to promise or declare any thing in His name, without intending to perform it. The violation of a solemn oath is called *perjury*, it is a presumptuous sin.

We find that Moses supposed that children would enquire the meaning of the religious rites and ceremonies observed by their parents : from whence we may infer, that God is well pleased with those that seek Him *early* ; and it is certainly the interest, as well as the duty of YOUTH to do so ; for there is no other way of securing the blessing of Heaven, or of guarding their minds against the allurements of the world. If the study of religion be deferred, other things will get possession of the affections of the heart, to the exclusion of God ; and the soul will remain (perhaps for ever) a stranger to the highest and most rational delight it is capable of enjoying.

God graciously promised the Israelites, “ that an observance of His Divine commands *should be their righteousness.*” From which we may understand, that

though they could have no natural *claim* to God's blessings without *unerring goodness*, he would make allowances for the infirmities of human nature, and on condition that they would regulate their conduct by the moral law, and offer the sacrifices which he had ordained as means of grace, He would remit the punishment due for their offences, and accept of their *best endeavours*, instead of *unsinning obedience*, provided they were accompanied with faith and trust in his mercy.

The righteousness of Christians consists in believing what has been revealed in the Scriptures concerning the salvation of mankind, partaking of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and conforming their lives to the Divine Precepts of the Gospel.

SECTION XXVII.

MOSES' EXHORTATION CONTINUED.

From Deut. Chap. vii.

WHEN the LORD thy GOD shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; and when the LORD thy GOD shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them; nor shew mercy unto them; neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.

For they will turn away thy son from following me,
that

that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.

But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire.

For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy GOD: the LORD thy GOD hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people (for ye were the fewest of all people), but because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bond-men, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Know therefore that the LORD thy GOD, he is GOD, the faithful GOD, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him, and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate him, to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him; he will repay him to his face.

Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.

Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep and do them; that the LORD thy GOD shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers: and he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he

will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee.

Thou shalt be blessed above all people : there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle.

And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt (which thou knowest) upon thee : but will lay them upon all them that hate thee.

And thou shalt consume all the people which the LORD thy GOD shall deliver thee ; thine eye shall have no pity upon them : neither shalt thou serve their gods, for that will be a snare unto thee.

If thou shalt say in thine heart, These nations are more than I, how can I dispossess them ? thou shalt not be afraid of them : but shalt well remember what the LORD thy GOD did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt : the great temptations which thine eyes saw, and the signs, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the stretched-out arm, whereby the LORD thy GOD brought thee out : so shall the LORD thy GOD do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid.

Moreover, the LORD thy GOD will send the hornet among them, until they that are left and hide themselves from thee, be destroyed.

Thou shalt not be affrighted at them : for the LORD thy GOD is among you, a mighty GOD and terrible.

And the LORD thy GOD will put out those nations before thee by little and little : thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee.

But the LORD thy GOD shall deliver them unto thee,
and

and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed.

And he shall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven ; there shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou have destroyed them.

The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire ; thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein : for it is an abomination to the LORD thy GOD.

Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it : but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it ; for it is a cursed thing.

All the commandments which I command thee this day, shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers.

And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy GOD led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna (which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know) that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these forty years.

Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy GOD chasteneth thee. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy GOD, to walk in his ways, and to fear

him. For the LORD thy GOD bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains, and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates, a land of oil-olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.

When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy GOD for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy GOD, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day.

Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied, then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy GOD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage:

Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint? who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end! and thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.

But thou shalt remember the LORD thy GOD: for it is he that giveth the power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant, which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy

thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day, that ye shall surely perish: as the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish, because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It appears at first sight very barbarous in Moses to desire the Israelites to treat the seven nations with so much severity: but we must remember, that they were wicked idolaters, and the Israelites were in this case instruments of punishment to them: had they been merely enemies to themselves, it would have been wrong to proceed against them with so much rigour; but God best knew what these nations deserved, and the Israelites were bound to obey his commands. Had any of them been preserved alive, most likely the people would have married amongst them, as the descendants of Seth did with the posterity of Cain, which was the means of corrupting the worship of God, and introducing the utmost disorder.

It was necessary, in order to maintain the honour of the LORD that the idolatrous kings should be put to death, and graven images, with every thing used in the worship of false gods, destroyed.

It is a great instance of a particular Providence ordering all things for the best, that the heathen nations were extirpated *by degrees*; for many of their fields and cities would have been desolate, and even filled with wild beasts, before the Israelites, who were, in comparison, few in number, would have been able to furnish them with inhabitants.

Whether the raiment of the Israelites, literally speak-

ing, *never waxed old*, is a difficult matter to determine. If they had no means of procuring new ones, there is no reason to doubt that God miraculously prevented their decay; but as they carried plenty of things out of Egypt, and had some manufactures among them, it is most probable this was not the case: and the expression, *thy raiment waxed not old, neither did thy foot swell these forty years*, may only mean, that the Israelites were never reduced to the necessity of wearing tattered clothes, or going bare foot for want of shoes.

We have before observed, that Moses' exhortations to the Israelites are in many respects applicable to Christians; several parts of this section are particularly so.

It was not for our own merit, that the LORD redeemed us, and took us into covenant with Himself; but because he is a faithful God, and sheweth mercy from generation to generation.

We must not presume on God's mercy, and think that, because we are taken into covenant, we shall be finally saved by it, without any thing done on our part; for those that hate and disobey God, He will certainly punish.

The afflictions we meet with, we are taught, by this section, to consider as *chastisements* designed to humble us, and to prove us. If we take them patiently, and amend our lives in consequence of them: if we make the commandments of God the rules of our actions, the LORD will conduct us safely through all the perils and dangers of this life, and bring us at last to that place of rest which is prepared for the faithful in Heaven.

In the day of prosperity, it behoves us to keep a strict guard on our hearts; for it is too often the case, that riches occasion people to forget God, and to ascribe their

their success in worldly affairs to their own wisdom or abilities, not considering that they are indebted to the goodness of GOD for the very bread they eat from day to day, as much as the Israelites were for the manna; and that, unless preserved by His power and goodness, they cannot be sure that their lives will be continued a single moment.

SECTION XXVIII.

MOSES' EXHORTATION CONTINUED.

From Deut. Chap. x.

And Moses said, Now Israel, what doth the LORD thy GOD require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy GOD, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy GOD with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the LORD and his statutes which I command thee this day for thy good?

Behold, the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, is the LORD's thy GOD, the earth also, with all that therein is.

Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.

Correct your hearts, therefore, and be no more stiff-necked.

For the LORD your GOD is GOD of Gods, and LORD of Lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward; He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger in giving him food and raiment.

Love ye therefore the stranger ; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God ; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.

He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things which thine eyes have seen.

Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons ; and now the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.

Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments alway.

And know ye this day : for I speak not with your children, which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the Lord your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched out arm. But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the LORD which he did, therefore obey Him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is worthy of observation, that Moses appeals to the knowledge of the very people to whom he addressed his discourse, for the truth of his assertions, which he certainly would not have done, if they had been false ; we may therefore depend upon the history he gave of the various occurrences that came under his observation, as authentic matters of fact : had they been otherwise, he would soon have been proved an impostor ; for however their descendants might have listened to fabulous tales, those whom he referred to as eye-witnesses, could not have been persuaded to believe that they really had beheld, what they had never seen ;

we

we may therefore safely give credit to his history, for there is every reason to believe that he was a faithful historian.

This part of Moses' exhortation affords very useful instruction to Christians, because the same disposition of mind which he informed the Israelites was required in them, is required in Christians, to render them acceptable to the LORD GOD.

What a magnificent idea does Moses give of the greatness of that Divine Being who was known as the LORD GOD of Israel! We find that he is GOD of Gods, and LORD of Lords, the SUPREME BEING. How highly then should we honour Him! Surely we can do no less than fear Him, and pay Him the best services we are capable of. The LORD is *our* Praise, and He is *our* GOD; as such, therefore, let us cleave to Him, and on no account allow ourselves to think Him less *great* than He is.

SECTION XXIX.

IN the following part of Moses' exhortation, he set before them *a blessing* and a *curse*, which is repeated in a subsequent section, and will be noticed in that place. After this, he again commanded them to destroy all monuments of idolatry where they went; and informed them, that as soon as they should be settled in the land of their inheritance, the LORD would appoint a place where His name should dwell; and to this, they would be required to repair at stated times with their households, to offer sacrifices, and to *rejoice*, before the LORD, from which time, they would not be at liberty to pay their homage to the LORD, in every place which they themselves might choose. He then gave them a licence to eat flesh in the land of Canaan, but prohibited blood.

Moses also enjoined them not to introduce into the worship of the LORD any of the ceremonies which the heathen made use of, as they were abominations to the LORD, particularly the horrid custom of offering their own sons and daughters as burnt-offerings: but they were to adhere steadily to the ordinances which Moses had before made known, and which he now repeated. From these injunctions we learn, that it is pleasing to the LORD to see His people assembled together in public worship, and that He delights in beholding them cheerful and happy. How far the ordinances of Moses are to be observed by Christians, may be learnt from the New Testament.

As many of the idolatrous priests pretended to be inspired by their gods to foretel future events, and by magical arts performed wonderful things, which passed on their infatuated followers as real miracles, Moses gave the Israelites a rule, by which they might distinguish a true prophet from these impostors. Which was this, not to think any one a true prophet who would want to entice them to follow other gods than the LORD. Christians (in the early ages of the Church especially) were liable to the same kind of imposition, and had also a rule to go by, as will be observed in its proper place.

As it was known to God that the Israelites would be apt to follow the example of their neighbours, in performing superstitious ceremonies, and seeking to pry into futurity, by consulting persons called wizards and sorcerers, who pretended to have intercourse with spirits, Moses was ordered to give them strict injunctions to the contrary*.

* Moses gave the Israelites a variety of other instructions; but as these related entirely to their own ceremonial and political law, they are omitted.

An early acquaintance with the word of GOD, should keep us from the *desire* of knowing future events, which GOD for wise reasons has concealed from us : but should we ever find an inclination to listen to fortune-tellers and conjurers, let us remember, that Moses has said, *these things are abominations to the LORD*. Such kind of persons cannot by any *human art*, penetrate into the secrets of Providence any more, than we can ; and if they really had an intercourse with spirits, they must be bad ones, for no others would presume to make known what GOD thinks fit to conceal ; therefore a good person would not wish to gain information by their means, nor trust himself to the direction of the Devil's agents. But we may assure ourselves, that fortune-tellers are impostors, and know no more than we do what shall befall us.

The Israelites were also repeatedly commanded not to make their sons and their daughters pass through the fire. In order to explain this, it is necessary to mention, that it was a custom among some of the Canaanites, to offer their children in sacrifice to an idol called Moloch. The original practice was, to burn the innocent victim in a fiery furnace, and sometimes they put it into a brass statue of their idol flaming hot, and to drown its cries, musicians were ordered to play on various instruments. This savage barbarity was carried to such an excess, that even mothers would embrace their tender infants, and then commit them to the flames, without even shedding a single tear. In latter times, they altered the custom, and made their children walk between two slow fires to the idol ; but this was only prolonging the torture, and was the custom the Scripture alludes to.

It is very amazing to think, how such things could ever be invented by men ; and we may reasonably suppose

pose they were at first instigated by the Devil, who glories in the miseries of mankind, and in working whatever is displeasing to ALMIGHTY GOODNESS.

Moses certainly was endued with the gift of prophecy, for he uttered many predictions, towards the end of his life : one in particular was very remarkable, respecting a prophet that should arise at a future time like himself.

'The LORD thy GOD (said he) will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me ; unto him ye shall hearken ; according to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy GOD in Horeb, in the day of the assembly saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my GOD, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.

The person foretold in this prophecy, is allowed to be the MESSIAH or SAVIOUR ; and the Jews certainly built great expectations upon it. We will defer the farther consideration of this prediction, till we shew how it was fulfilled in the person of CHRIST. Let us, however, observe, that Moses foretold those would be punished, who should refuse to hearken to this new *Law-giver* and *Mediator*, and he gave them a rule by which a just judgment might be formed of a true or a false prophet.

SECTION XXX.

MOSES' EXHORTATION CONTINUED—THE COVENANT
RENEWED WITH THE ISRAELITES.

From Deut. Chap. xxix. xxx.

THESE are the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of
Israel

Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.

And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land ;

The great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs and those great miracles :

Hath not the LORD given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day* ?

And I have led you forty years in the wilderness : your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot.

Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine nor strong drink : that ye might know that I am the LORD your GOD.

Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do.

Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your GOD ; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel.

Your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood, unto the drawer of thy water :

That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy GOD, and into his oath, which the LORD thy GOD maketh with thee this day :

That He may establish thee to-day for a people unto Himself, and that He may be unto thee a God, as He hath said unto thee, and as He hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath ;

* Learned critics say, that this verse may be translated interrogatively. See Essay for a new translation of the Bible.

But with him that standeth here with us this day before the LORD your GOD, and also with him that is not here with us this day :

Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our GOD, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood :

And it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst ;

The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven.

And the LORD shall separate him unto evil, out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law :

So that the generation to come of your children that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the LORD hath laid upon it ;

And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger and in his wrath :

Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger?

Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD GOD of their fathers, which he made

made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt : for they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given unto them : and the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book : and the LORD rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day.

The secret things belong unto the LORD our GOD ; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations whither the LORD thy GOD hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the LORD thy GOD, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul ; that then the LORD thy GOD will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy GOD hath scattered thee.

If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy GOD gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee : and the LORD thy GOD will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it : and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.

And the LORD thy GOD will correct thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

And

And the LORD thy GOD will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee.

And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all his commandments, which I command thee this day.

And the LORD thy GOD will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good : for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers : if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy GOD to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the LORD thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.

It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it ? neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it ?

See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil ; in that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy GOD, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply : and the LORD thy GOD shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them ; I denounce unto you this day that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your
days

days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan, to go to possess it.

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: that thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him; for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

And Moses and the priests the Levites spake unto all Israel, saying, Take heed, and hearken, O Israel; this day thou art become the people of the LORD thy God.

This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments; thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice: and the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments; and to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken.

Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the LORD thy God, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As many of the people were either not born, or too young,

young, to understand the covenant which was made with their fathers at Horeb, the LORD vouchsafed to renew it with them, and Moses was the *mediator* as in the beginning. All those were included, who were under the necessity of being absent.

On the same day that the covenant was made, Moses charged the people to build an altar to the LORD, and write upon the stones that composed it, the words of the law, and directed, that as soon as they had passed over Jordan, the twelve tribes should divide themselves into two parties, one to stand on mount Gerazim, the other on mount Ebal (which were so near to each other, that nothing but a valley, about 200 paces wide, parted them) and there to pronounce a particular form of blessing on those that kept the covenant, and of cursing on those that broke it: and we have in our Church a ceremony answerable to this, a commination or denouncing of God's vengeance against sinners, pronounced every year, on the first day of Lent, commonly called Ash-Wednesday, when suitable prayers are read, and as in the original appointment at mount Gerazim, all the people answer AMEN, by which they acknowledge the Divine justice of the denunciation (which is collected from the Scriptures), and the necessity of avoiding those vices, to which the curse of GOD is due.

We find that the LORD encouraged the Israelites to be obedient, by promises of great blessings; and deterred them from disobedience by severe threatenings; and gave great hopes of mercy to the penitent; so that no motive was wanting to incline them to keep the covenant.

How comfortable was the solemn assurance they received, that they were become the people of the LORD their GOD! How awful the thought, that they had bound themselves to keep *all* His commandments! This obligation

obligation was a very extensive one ; for the law of Moses consisted, as we find, of numberless articles. The chief end of the *ceremonial* precepts was, as we have before observed, to prefigure the person and transactions of the MESSIAH ; of the *political* precepts, to keep them a separate nation ; and the *moral* were in general suited to all mankind. This law was perfectly adapted to the condition of the Israelites ; but it was very burdensome, and gave no certain hopes of eternal happiness. The Christian Covenant is greatly superior to it, as is proved by the writings of the New Testament : in studying of which, we shall find ample cause to be thankful to GOD for making us partakers of the better Covenant. In the mean time, let us treasure up in our mind the religious and moral injunctions which Moses gave to the Israelites ; for they will be found very applicable to Christians, who are become the peculiar people of GOD.

SECTION XXXI.

MOSES ENCOURAGETH JOSHUA AND THE ISRAELITES
TO CONFIDE IN GOD.

From Deut. Chap. xxxi.

AND Moses went, and spake these words unto all Israel.

And he said unto them, I am an hundred and twenty years old this day ; I can no more go out and come in ; also the LORD hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan.

The LORD thy GOD, he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them ; and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the LORD hath said.

Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be
afraid

afraid of them : for the LORD thy GOD, he it is that doth go with thee, he will not fail thee nor forsake thee.

And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage : for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them ; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it.

And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee, he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee : fear not, neither be dismayed.

And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests, the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and unto all the elders of Israel.

And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy GOD, in the place which he shall choose ; thou shalt read this law before all Israel, in their hearing.

Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn and fear the LORD your GOD, and observe to do all the words of this law ; and that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your GOD, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold thy days approach that thou must die : call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation.

And the LORD appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of
of

of a cloud : and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, and this people will rise up, and go after the gods of the strangers of the land whither they go to be amongst them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them : Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them ; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us because our GOD is not amongst us ?

And I will surely hide my face in that day, for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods.

Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel ; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel.

For when I shall have brought them into the land, which I swear unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey ; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat ; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant.

And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them, as a witness ; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed ; for I know their imagination which they go about, even now before I have brought them into the land which I swear.

Moses therefore wrote the song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel.

And

And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong, and of a good courage : for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore unto them : and I will be with thee.

And it came to pass when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished ; that Moses commanded the Levites which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.

For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck ; behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD ; and how much more after my death ?

Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak those words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them.

For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you : and evil will befall you in the latter days ; because ye will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands.

And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of the song, until they were ended.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Moses was extremely anxious for the future welfare of the Israelites ! It was very proper that the law should be written, and that a copy of it should be deposited in the Ark, lest the copies given to the elders should be lost or corrupted, by going through such a number of hands.

Once in seven years, the whole law was to be read
publicly

publicly before all the inhabitants of the land of Israel; not an individual was suffered to remain in ignorance of his duty, or of the blessings and curses annexed to the covenant.

That the Israelites might be convinced of the foreknowledge of God, the LORD foretold how they would forsake His covenant, and what would be their sentiments, when they had brought the evil upon themselves which he threatened.

With what calm resignation did Moses receive the tidings of his approaching death! His only care was to give all possible instruction to the people he was going to leave, and to their leader, who was to succeed him. The subsequent behaviour of the Israelites will shew that he was a true prophet.

That they might never want a proper form of devotion the LORD inspired Moses to compose a song, or poem, and commanded him, after repeating it to the Israelites, to cause them to learn it by heart. In this was expressed, in a most sublime manner, the many benefits and favours which God had bestowed on His people; their ingratitude and forgetfulness of Him; the punishments with which he had afflicted them, and the commination of greater judgments, if they persisted to provoke Him, by a repetition of wickedness.

How dreadful it is to reflect, that, under a more perfect dispensation than the Mosaic, thousands, nay millions, amongst us, have grown up without any religious instruction, and have lived in worse than heathen darkness, in a land, on which the Sun of Righteousness sheds its clearest light! At length, through the tender mercy of our God, the day spring from on high has visited them, to guide their feet into the way of peace. The children of the poor, who before knew not any thing, are now taught to fear the LORD their God, and keep

His Sabbaths ; and we may hope, that the rising generation will be a people acceptable to Him.

SECTION XXII.

THE DEATH OF MOSES.

From Deut. Chap. xxxiii. xxxiv.

AND Moses the man of God blessed Israel before his death *.

And Moses went up from the plains of Moab, unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the LORD shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh ; and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm-trees, unto Zoar.

And the LORD said unto him, This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed : I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.

So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.

And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth peor ; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.

And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died : his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the

* See the blessings upon each tribe in Deut. xxxiii.

plains of Moab thirty days : so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.

And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face :

In all the signs and the wonders which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land.

And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We have now gone through the PENTATEUCH, or the five books written by Moses, called Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. They are exceedingly valuable to us on account of the important instruction they afford, the examples of faith and piety proposed to our imitation, and the wonderful proofs of the power, wisdom, and goodness of GOD, which, if properly considered, will incline us to love and fear Him : and they likewise contain, the only account to be depended on of the original of all things. The last chapter of Deuteronomy is supposed to have been written by Joshua : whoever was the writer was certainly inspired by GOD, for no *man* knew the circumstances that are here related. Lest the people should offer divine worship to Moses after his death, the place of his burial was concealed.

Moses, though 120 years old, enjoyed perfect health and strength to the last, and the faculties of his mind were likewise unimpaired ; yet he cheerfully obeyed the summons of the LORD, and ascended the mountain to die there. This is a convincing proof, that he looked for the performance of a *better covenant in another world* ; for though we do not find in the BIBLE, that Moses was

commissioned by God to make any promises to the people concerning *everlasting happiness*, they certainly understood the blessings of Canaan to be *types* or *shadows* of *good things to come*. Before his death, he pronounced a prophetic blessing on the people.

We have now brought the history of Moses to a conclusion ; and surely no man ever led a more exemplary life. With what amiable meekness did he endure the hardships and toil of governing a discontented people ! nothing could abate the ardor of his affection for his countrymen, or dishearten him in his endeavours to serve them. It was because his love for them was invincible, that he endured all their complaints and reproaches, with such persevering calmness, as to obtain him this character, that *he was very meek above all the men that dwelt upon the face of the earth ;* * which He who knew all hearts, even the SPIRIT of Truth, dictated Moses to write of himself, that the world might be made acquainted with what otherwise would never have been known.

From the example of Moses, let us learn to cultivate that charity which is not easily provoked. To enable us to practise the virtue of meekness, it is not necessary that we should be possessed of distinguished abilities, or placed in an exalted station. Every relation, every situation in life, affords us sufficient opportunities for the exercise of this temper. In the present state of human nature, we need not therefore be at a loss for occasions to exercise a meek and gentle temper ; and if we be properly under the influence of the principle of benevolence, we shall never want the inclination.

* Numbers xii. 3.

SECTION XXXIII.

JOSHUA APPOINTED TO THE GOVERNMENT BY THE
LORD, AND ACCEPTED BY THE PEOPLE.

From Joshua, Chap. i.

Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea, toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land which I swear unto their fathers to give them.

Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses, my servant, commanded thee; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage, be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy GOD is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals: for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your GOD giveth you to possess it.

And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, spake Joshua, saying, Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, The LORD your GOD hath given you rest, and hath given you this land:

Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle, shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side Jordan; but ye shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valour, and help them:

Until the LORD have given your brethren rest, as he hath given you, and they also have possessed the land which the LORD your GOD giveth them: then ye shall return unto the land of your possession, and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD's servant gave you on this side Jordan toward the sun rising.

And they answered Joshua saying, all that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us we will go.

According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the LORD thy GOD be with thee, as he was with Moses.

Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words, in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Joshua was the properest person in the world for the important office he was appointed to, because he had for some time been the constant companion of Moses, and received ample instructions from him: he was likewise a man of exemplary life and conversation. To conquer Canaan, and govern Israel, were great undertakings; but he had every degree of encouragement that he could desire, for he had received infallible assurances that the LORD would strengthen him to perform whatever he required him to attempt.

The enterprize of passing the river Jordan was certainly (according to the common course of things) very unlikely to be attended with success, as there was no bridge by which they could march across it; neither were they furnished with boats to pass it; and the river though not broad, was too rapid for armed men to swim over; notwithstanding these obstacles, Joshua made not the least objection to the undertaking, knowing that all things are possible to GOD. The people were in a most excellent disposition of mind, for they willingly submitted to his authority, and devoutly wished for the PRESENCE of GOD amongst them, encouraging Joshua to pursue the work he had engaged in with steadiness and cheerfulness.

Joshua on this occasion commanded the people *to prepare them victuals*; from which we may conclude, that the LORD had informed him manna would cease. We find that the Reubenites and Gadites attended, according to the covenant they had made with Moses; but as their tribes composed an army of an hundred thousand fighting men, he took only half of them, leaving the rest to defend their new possessions and their families.

From the LORD's injunction to Joshua, to meditate on the book of the law day and night, we may understand that a diligent study of the Scriptures, with a view to the regulation of our lives and actions, is the way to obtain prosperity. Of this, we may be certain, that it is the only likely method to secure our eternal happiness.

SECTION XXXIV.

JOSHUA SENDS SPIES TO JERICHO, WHO ARE CONCEALED FROM THEIR PURSUERS BY RAHAB.

From Joshua, Chap. ii.

AND Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men, to spy secretly, saying, Go, view the land, even Jericho: and they went and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.

And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel, to search out the country.

And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country.

And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were: and it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went, I wot not; pursue after them quickly, for ye shall overtake them.

But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof.

And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan,
unto

unto the fords : and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate.

And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof ; and she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.

For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when you came out of Egypt ; and what you did unto the two kings of the Amorites that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.

And as soon as we had heard these things our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you : for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

Now, therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house ; and give me a true token : and that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.

And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee.

Then she let them down by a cord through the window : for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall.

And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you ; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned ; and afterward may ye go your way.

And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear.

Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by : and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household home unto thee.

And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless : and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be upon our head, if any hand be upon him.

And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear.

And she said, according to your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed. And she bound the scarlet line in the window.

And they went, and came unto the mountain, and abode there three days until the pursuers were returned. And the pursuers sought them throughout all the way, but found them not.

So the two men returned, and descended from the mountain, and passed over, and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all things that befel them ;

And they said unto Joshua, Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land ; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jericho was a city just opposite to the place where the Israelites were to pass the river Jordan, and the nearest for them to attack. From what motive Joshua was induced to send spies thither, we are not informed ; but we may reasonably conjecture, that he was commanded to do so, for the purpose of saving Rahab, who would otherwise have been involved in the general destruction.

This

This woman is called a *harlot*; but it seems that the Hebrew word will admit of another interpretation, *an hostess*. From Rahab's account of the consternation which prevailed in Jericho, we learn in what manner the *terror of the LORD*, that *fear* which he promised to send *before his people* upon the heathen nations, operated, and by the effect which it had upon her, we may understand, that it was calculated to produce wisdom in well-inclined minds, but to intimidate the presumptuous sinner.

In order to clear Rahab from the imputation of treachery and treason, we must consider that her mind was possessed with a thorough persuasion, that the *God of Israel* was *LORD* of all things in heaven and earth; and that He was able to do by that city as He had done by Egypt, and she feared His *ALMIGHTY* power. By what means she had received intimation of the design of *GOD* towards the Canaanites is uncertain, though from her own words we may conclude, that the king and people of Jericho had been warned of the intended destruction of the place: all excepting herself were unmoved; she, on the contrary, secretly resolved to adore and worship the *GOD* of Israel; she therefore rejoiced in the opportunity of being serviceable to His people. Those kings who threw off the authority of *GOD*, and devoted themselves to the worship of idols, encouraging their subjects to commit abominations to the *LORD*, were not intitled to allegiance from true believers, because no person could obey them, without disobeying *GOD*; therefore what would have been treason and treachery in another case, was none in Rahab's, as she acted from what ought to be the first principle in every breast, *love and fear of the SUPREME BEING*. Her example, however, in respect to betraying her country, is not recommended to future imitation, for it was only justi-

fiable under those peculiar circumstances ; *against* a people *evidently* devoted to destruction for their wickedness, and in *favour* of a people *visibly* under the guidance and protection of the ALMIGHTY. In respect likewise to the falsity she uttered, her case was of a very particular nature ; she had but one alternative, either to conceal the men whose cause she had espoused for just reasons, or to deliver them to their enemies ; but we cannot wonder, that she should be solicitous to provide for her own future safety, by preserving those who would soon have the power of protecting her from the general destruction which she believed was coming on her country, and which her utmost fidelity to the people of Jericho would not have been able to avert. Had she owned they were in the house, she would have betrayed those who, properly speaking, were become her countrymen.

The Scriptures of the New Testament point out Rahab as a person of exemplary piety ; and indeed to carry her through such an undertaking, she must have had a great degree of faith* ; but she did not rest here, she shewed her *faith* by her *works*†. Let us imitate Rahab in respect to faith and trust in God, and, like her, let us shew kindness to his faithful servants. We shall never be tempted, as she was, to forego our allegiance to our sovereign on account of IDOLATROUS WORSHIP, for none but a *professed* CHRISTIAN can reign over us : the King is bound to defend our faith, and consequently he is entitled to the loyalty of his subjects, who could not betray him to an enemy without being guilty of a great sin.

* Heb. xi. 31.

† Jam. ii. 25.

SECTION XXXV.

THE WATERS OF JORDAN DIVIDE AND THE PEOPLE
PASS THROUGH THE MIDST OF THE RIVER.

From Joshua, Chap. iii. iv.

AND Joshua rose early in the morning: and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over.

And it came to pass after three days that the officers went through the host; and they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.

Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed this way heretofore.

And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves; for to-morrow the LORD will do wonders among you.

And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people.

And the LORD said unto Joshua, this day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.

And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan.

And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God.

And

And Joshua said, hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites.

Behold, the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all the earth, passeth over before you into Jordan.

Now therefore take ye twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man.

And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the LORD of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap.

And it came to pass when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people; and as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest),

That the waters which came down from above, stood and rose up on an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan; and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt-sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho.

And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.

And it came to pass when all the people were clean passed over Jordan, that the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying,

saying, Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man, and command you them, saying, Take ye hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging-place where ye shall lodge this night.

Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man.

And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the LORD your GOD into the midst of Jordan, and take ye up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel :

That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? then shall ye answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever.

And the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the LORD spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there.

And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there unto this day.

For the priests which bare the ark stood in the midst of Jordan, until every thing was finished that the LORD commanded Joshua to speak unto the people, according to

to all that Moses commanded Joshua : and the people hasted and passed over.

And it came to pass when all the people were clean passed over, that the ark of the LORD passed over, and the priests in the presence of the people.

And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, passed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses spake unto them : about forty thousand prepared for war passed over before the LORD unto battle, to the plains of Jericho.

On that day the LORD magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel ; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life.

And the LORD spake unto Joshua, Saying, Command the priests that bear the ark of the testimony, that they come up out of Jordan.

Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, Come ye up out of Jordan.

And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks as they did before.

And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho.

And those twelve stones which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.

And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones ?

Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.

For

For the LORD your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over: That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Jordan was the most considerable river in the land of Judea; its course was very rapid, though it was not broad; it usually overflowed its banks about the time of the early harvest. The plain of Jordan, (through which the river ran,) so famed for its palm-trees, is said to have been overspread with rose-trees of such an incorruptible nature, that being kept in water, they would appear in full bloom at any season of the year.

On this occasion the LORD honoured Joshua, for it is supposed that he spake unto him from the *mercy-seat*, and by this means gave a convincing proof to the people, that he was with him as He was with Moses, and that he should even command the priests.

The cloudy pillar no longer appeared, for Moses the *mediator* was dead, and the LORD never honoured any other person by speaking to him in so familiar a manner; besides the Israelites were now going among heathens, and the LORD, who had declared Himself to be a *jealous* God, would not display His glory among idolators, but only in the palace of His holiness. For the future, their marches were to be regulated by the ARK and as the DIVINE PRESENCE was still manifested from the *mercy-seat*, the LORD might truly be said to be among them, and to lead them.

The

The Israelites passed over Jordan just forty years wanting five days after their departure out of Egypt, four days before the annual solemnity of the passover, on the very day on which the preparation for it began, that their entrance into Canaan might be sanctified by that religious feast.

The miracle of dividing Jordan was excellently calculated to confirm to this new generation the belief of those which had been wrought for their forefathers : there could now remain no doubt in their minds that the LORD had conducted his people through the Red-sea, as they had beheld with their own eyes the waters of a river, which used to flow with an impetuous stream, standing in heaps, arrested in their course by an ALMIGHTY power !

The LORD is in this section called the LORD of the *whole earth*, and this title is frequently given to Him by the prophets* ; from whence we may infer, that, although GOD of His infinite goodness was pleased to form a plan for promoting virtue and preserving true religion, in one nation of the world, upon which He conferred particular blessings and privileges, He did not withdraw His regard from other nations ; but was still the GOD and FATHER of all *mankind*, however various His dispensations towards them. We find that the miracle of dividing Jordan was designed to shew forth the Almighty power of the LORD to *all the people of the earth*. It was the depravity of the heathens, and their attachment to idols, that prevented their improving from it.

The reflections made on the passage through the Red-sea, are likewise applicable to this wonderful event.

* Micah iv. 13. Zech. iv. 14, and vi. 5.

SECTION XXXVI.

CIRCUMCISION RENEWED—MANNA CEASETH.

From Joshua, Chap. v.

AND it came to pass when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the Sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel.

And the LORD said unto Joshua, Circumcise again the children of Israel the second time.

For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war which came out of Egypt were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: unto whom the LORD sware, that he would not shew them the land which the LORD sware unto their fathers, that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

And their children whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised.

And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.

And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even, in the plains of Jericho.

And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the self-same day.

And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children

dren of Israel manna any more, but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We have in the beginning of this section a farther account of the effects of the *terror* or *fear* of the LORD.

The rite of circumcision had been discontinued for a number of years, perhaps from the time that the Israelites provoked GOD to sentence them to die in the wilderness. It was a sign of faith and trust in GOD, the *seal* of his covenant, which those rebellious persons, who despised the promises of the LORD, had broken, therefore they were not allowed the privilege of transferring the covenant to their children; but when the LORD renewed the covenant with their posterity, he restored the rite of circumcision, and thereby qualified them to partake of that holy ordinance, which was instituted in commemoration of GOD's delivering the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, from Egyptian bondage. This was the third passover, and every one had been distinguished by some remarkable event. The first was at the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt; the second at the dedication of the tabernacle, soon after which the Israelites committed the sin that excluded them from Canaan; and then it was suspended till the present joyful occasion.

After the celebration of the passover, Manna ceased, for they had no longer need of miraculous food, as the land would supply them plentifully, for it was harvest time, and the country people had deserted their corn, because their fears impelled them to take shelter in Jericho.

The ceasing of Manna was a very remarkable circumstance

cumstance; it served to shew the Israelites, that the failing of it was an act of God's providence, and not the effect of natural causes. It also proves, that God does not work miracles unnecessarily.

SECTION XXXVII.

JOSHUA'S REMARKABLE VISION—JERICHO TAKEN—
RAHAB SAVED.

From Joshua, Chap. vi.

AND it came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lift up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him, with his sword drawn in his hand; and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us or for our adversaries? and he said, Nay; but as PRINCE * of the host of the LORD am I now come.

And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my LORD unto his servant? and the PRINCE of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.

Now Jericho was straitly shut up, because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.

And the LORD said unto Joshua, See I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.

And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.

And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams horns: and the seventh day ye shall

* Marginal translation.

compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.

And it shall come to pass that when they make a long blast with the rams horns, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.

And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams horns before the ark of the LORD.

And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city; and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the LORD.

And it came to pass when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams horns passed on before the LORD, and blew with the trumpets; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them.

And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the rere-ward came after the ark, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets.

And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout: then shall ye shout.

So the ark of the LORD compassed the city, going about it once: and they came into the camp, and lodged in the camp.

And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD.

And seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually,
and

and blew with the trumpets ; and the armed men went before them ; but the rere-ward came after the ark of the LORD, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets.

And the second day they compassed the city once, and returned into the camp : so they did six days.

And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner, seven times : only on that day they compassed the city seven times.

And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, shout, for the LORD hath given you the city.

And the city shall be accursed, even it and all that are therein, to the LORD ; only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.

But all the silver and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD ; they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.

So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets ; and it came to pass when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.

But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out

out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her.

And the young men that were spies, went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had: and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel.

And they burned the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD.

And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had: and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.

So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame was noised throughout all the country.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

He who appeared to Joshua could be no other than the LORD GOD; for had it been one of the heavenly host, he would not have received the *adoration* of Joshua, which was due to GOD alone. And we find that Joshua was commanded to shew the utmost reverence, by pulling off his shoes, as the place he stood on was sanctified by the appearance of the LORD of *all things*. Joshua gladly submitted to this heavenly commander, convinced that he was the same good Being who had guided
and

and directed Moses; for no other could, *in his own name*, promise him the conquest of Jericho. Joshua was commanded to rely entirely on the LORD, and not to make the usual preparations for a siege, as the whole affair would be miraculous.

The proceedings of Joshua and the armies of Israel must have had a very strange appearance in the eyes of the enemy; but certainly nothing could be better calculated to give glory to GOD, from whose hand victory would come. The priests were GOD's ministers, and in His name they proclaimed war with the Canaanites. All the people were commanded to keep silence; and in order to exercise their patience, they were required to march round the city for six successive days: whether the seventh was the Sabbath or not, we are not told; most likely it was; but the Israelites could not be accused of violating the Sabbath, because they were employed in the immediate service of GOD, who had sanctified the day, and had lately shewn Himself *visibly* as PRINCE of the hosts of Israel.

What confusion must have ensued, when the walls of Jericho fell to the ground! and how must the wretched inhabitants have been dispirited! Now the people of Israel were perfectly convinced that no adversary, how formidable soever, could stand before the LORD; and that the strongest walls were no defence to those, who were for their wickedness devoted to destruction.

Rahab was not forgotten; the scarlet line was carefully looked for, and she and her friends were preserved. Then followed a most dreadful slaughter; men, women, and children, fell a prey to the wrath of GOD! It was now too late for them to expect mercy: they knew what had befallen Egypt; but they rejected the warnings of Heaven, defied the *living* GOD, and worshipped CREATURES, and so brought His justice upon themselves.

The severe treatment of this city might likewise be intended to strike others with awe. By the expression, that the city and its inhabitants should be *accursed* is meant, that they should be *exterminated, destroyed, and rooted out**. This curse upon Jericho was *prophetic*, as will appear in a future part of this history.

Rahab was afterwards married to Salmon, at that time head of the tribe of Judah.

SECTION XXXVIII.

THE PUNISHMENT OF ACHAN—THE CITY AI TAKEN†.

THOUGH Joshua had given such strict injunctions to the people, not to take of the accursed thing, meaning such as they could not take without bringing the curse of God upon themselves (namely, things which were either devoted to destruction, or to be consecrated to the Lord), a man of the tribe of Judah, whose name was Achan, seized upon some of the rich plunder, and concealed it in his tent. Joshua, unsuspecting of his trespass, and in full confidence that the Lord would continue to bless the armies of His people with success, detached a small body of 3000 men only to attack the city of Ai. Contrary to his expectations they were defeated, a few of them slain, and the rest put to flight. This defeat struck a damp upon the courage of the people, and Joshua, being at a loss how to proceed, had recourse to God. The Lord informed him, (by Urim and Thummim, as is supposed) that His divine commands had been sacrilegiously infringed, and commanded him to have the offender punished with death.

To find out the person who had taken the *accursed*

* Essay for a new translation.

† See Joshua, Chap. vii. viii.
thing,

thing, Joshua, early the next morning, assembled the tribes together before the tabernacle, where, by casting the lot, first upon the tribes, and so proceeding from tribe to family, from family to household, and from household to particular persons, the criminal was at length discovered to be Achan.

Achan, instead of confessing his crime immediately, suffered this exact scrutiny to be made; and it is not unlikely, that those Israelites, who fell before Ai, connived at his offence, perhaps with a view of experiencing, whether the LORD would execute vengeance against him, or not.

Joshua then conjured Achan to give glory to the LORD. When Achan found that his crime could be no longer concealed, he confessed that he had taken a royal robe, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, and hid them in the earth in the midst of his tent. Search was made, and they were found in this place. It was highly necessary, for this honour of the LORD, that an example should be made of such an offender, because the LORD had given an express command, that a *presumptuous sinner* should be put to death*; and the Mosaic law did not admit of atonement for *individuals*, who committed this crime; they were doomed to fall as a sacrifice of atonement for that *nation*, which was separated as a peculiar people to the LORD, and whose privileges as such, were suspended, till the sacrilegious member was cut off. Achan, therefore, with his whole family, were condemned to be stoned to death, which sentence was executed in the valley of Achor; they were afterwards burned, and a heap of stones raised over their ashes, as a monument of this dreadful judgment.

* Numb xv.

Though we are not expressly told so, there is reason to think, that Achan's family were accomplices with him, or at least privy to his crime, for he could not well have concealed these things in the midst of his tent without their knowledge. Achan had a very proper sense of his sin, and died penitent; we may therefore hope that he and his family were pardoned, and received to mercy.

It is very probable that those people who fled before Ai were elated with their success against Jericho, and imputed it to the personal valour of Israel, not to the miraculous power of the LORD.

The LORD certainly could have pointed out the sinner at once, but he chose to let the discovery be made by lot, in a solemn manner, in order to deter the people from such sacrilegious crimes for the future; that when they saw they could not conceal any thing from the knowledge of the LORD, they might fear to disobey him. And this part of Sacred History affords a very striking warning to all persons who dare to practise wickedness in *secret*, as it proves that there is no concealing any thing from that great BEING, who is present in all places.

Soon after the death of Achan, Joshua was commanded to go, without fear or dismay, and attack the city of Ai, and the LORD gave the people permission to exert their own skill and courage on this occasion, and to appropriate the spoil to themselves. Joshua immediately selected 30,000 men, and proceeded with his army agreeably to the directions which the LORD had given him, and gained a complete victory; the whole army of the enemy was destroyed, the city of Ai burnt and made a heap of rubbish, all the inhabitants of it were put to the sword, and the king who was taken prisoner, was ordered to be hanged upon a gibbet till sun-set, when

when he was taken down, thrown in at a gate of the city, and a heap of stones raised over him. The cattle and the spoil of the city the Israelites took as a prey for themselves.

As Joshua was now not far distant from the mountains Gerizim and Ebal, he resolved to obey the command which he had received from Moses, respecting the reading the law, and propounding the blessings and curses to the people; he therefore caused an altar to be built and all the people, men, women, and children, assembled; the law was read according to the form prescribed; and we are told, that there was not a word of all that Moses commanded which Joshua read not before the whole congregation of Israel.

SECTION XXXIX.

THE GIBEONITES DECEIVE JOSHUA AND THE PRINCES *.

It has been already observed, that the land of Canaan was inhabited by the descendants of Canaan the son of Ham. Canaan had eleven sons, who were the heads of as many tribes or nations: five of them, from whom the different kingdoms of the Canaanites proceeded, were named, Heth, Jebusi, Amori, Gergashi, Hivi: from them their tribes were called the Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, Gergashites, and Hivites. The people that are particularly called the Canaanites, are supposed, as well as the Perizzites, to have consisted of the mingled tribes of the Canaanites, who had been engaged in fierce wars with the Egyptians, and were pointed out for destruction because they were the most

* See Joshua, Chap. ix.

warlike, and on that account likely to intimidate the Israelites.

The people of Israel, by the LORD's assistance, had advanced so rapidly towards Jericho and Ai, that a general consternation spread itself throughout the idolatrous nations: but whilst the Israelites were sacrificing to GOD, and war was suspended, the Canaanites, instead of repenting of their abominable sins, hardened their hearts, like Pharaoh, resolving to make resistance, though the miracles that had been performed at Jordan and Jericho were sufficient, one would have supposed, to convince them that the Israelites were assisted and protected by an ALMIGHTY BEING.

Four cities only among the Gibeonites feared the power of GOD, and seemed to have understood that the Canaanites would be extirpated without reserve, but that the Israelites might make a league with distant nations: this circumstance shews, that the laws of Moses were known in the world. The ambassadors of the Gibeonites managed their business with great artfulness, pretending to come from a very distant country, and shewing their old shoes and mouldy bread as proofs of their assertions; and they effectually deceived not only the princes of Israel, but Joshua himself, who inconsiderately concluded a treaty with them, and ratified it with a solemn oath, without enquiring of GOD whether he ought to do so or not.

After the death of Moses, Joshua, as the *Leader* and *General* of GOD's people, was commanded in all important concerns to have recourse to the High Priest, who put on his robes and breast plate, and presented himself in the Holy Place, and there, standing with his face towards the Ark or Mercy-Seat where the DIVINE PRESENCE was manifest between the Cherubims, he asked counsel of the LORD, by URIM and THUMMIM, which

which he communicated to the person in whose name he made the enquiry. The answer so given is in many parts of Scripture styled the ORACLE OF GOD.

Joshua certainly was very blameable, in not having recourse to such an infallible mean of directing his judgment in respect to his league with the Gibeonites, and (as is usually the case in all important matters which are precipitately determined) he committed great errors, for he had received a strict injunction not to make a league or covenant with any Canaanitish nation; it appears to have been an *inconsiderate*, and not a *presumptuous* act; therefore GOD pardoned him and the princes, and allowed them to fulfil the league, which they had solemnly entered into in His holy name: so they spared the lives of the people of those four cities, notwithstanding they were *Canaanites*; but to punish the Gibeonites for their deceit, GOD condemned them to servile employments. The nature of their punishment was this: a great quantity of wood was required for the altar of burnt offerings, and of water for the frequent washings which made a part of the Jewish purifications; these and other slavish works of the same kind, such as washing the vessels, carrying out ashes, sweeping the courts, &c. which otherwise the Levites must have performed, were required of the Gibeonites.

The Gibeonites were very blameable for telling such falsities, though they were very commendable in respect to their faith and submission to GOD. Their fraud was soon discovered, and for that they were condemned to slavery; but it was of an honourable kind, and such as gave them an opportunity of improving in that holy religion to which they were become proselytes, and prevented their returning to their former idolatries. Now was fulfilled the curse of Canaan the son of Ham,

from whom these Gibeonites descended, for they were *servants of servants to their brethren* * ; they were obliged to deliver up their cities, and, it is supposed, they were afterwards dispersed among the Levites, and came up with them in their course to serve at the altar, out of the profits of which they had their maintenance.

As the Gibeonites had obtained the league by fraudulent practices, there was a pretence for the Israelites concealing it, and putting them to death ; but we find they would not break their oath. Their conduct in this respect is very exemplary : for every person ought to be extremely cautious how he enters into solemn engagements ; but when once made, they should be strictly observed ; nay, even if we give our promise on our own word, without calling God to witness, nothing should provoke us to break it, for other people's sin is no excuse for our own.

SECTION XL.

THE SUN STANDETH STILL AT JOSHUA'S COMMAND.

From Joshua, Chap. x.

Now it came to pass, when Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it ; as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai and her king ; and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, and were among them ; that they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it was a greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty.

* See Section xi. vol. i.

Wherefore

Wherefore Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem sent unto Hoham king of Hebron, and unto Piram king of Jarmuth, and unto Japhia king of Lachish, and unto Debir king of Eglon, saying, Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon; for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel.

Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it.

And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us. So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour.

And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee.

Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night.

And the LORD discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Beth horon, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah.

And it came to pass as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Beth horon, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hail stones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.

Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon: and thou Moon in the valley of Ajalon.

And the Sun stood still, and the Moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies: is not this written in the book of Jasher? so the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.

And there was no day like that, before it or after it that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel.

And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal.

But these five kings fled, and hid themselves in a cave, at Makkedah.

And it was told Joshua, saying, The five kings are found hid in a cave at Makkedah.

And Joshua said, Roll great stones upon the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for to keep them.

And stay ye not, but pursue after your enemies, and smite the hindmost of them: suffer them not to enter into their cities: for the LORD your God hath delivered them into your hand.

And it came to pass when Joshua and the children of Israel had made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter till they were consumed, that the rest which remained of them entered into the fenced cities.

And all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace: none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel.

Then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave.

And

And they did so, and brought forth those five kings unto him out of the cave, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon.

And it came to pass when they had brought out those five kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war, which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them.

And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage; for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight.

And afterwards Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees; and they were hanging upon the trees until the evening.

And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave's mouth, which remain until this very day.

So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD GOD of Israel commanded.

And Joshua smote them from Kadeshbarnea even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon.

And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time: because the LORD GOD of Israel fought for Israel.

And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp at Gilgal.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The storm of hail stones which destroyed such numbers of the enemy, seems to have been like that which killed the multitude of the Egyptians when Pharaoh refused to let Israel depart: but the miracle which followed, was such as had never been known before.

As Joshua and the Israelites had so many enemies to encounter at once, and the LORD had commanded that they should be put to the sword, the natural day would have been too short for the completion of their work. Animated by Divine assistance, and desirous to save their new proselytes, these valiant men were eager to pursue the victory, and night would have been an interruption to their success; no wonder therefore, that Joshua should form a wish that the day might be lengthened, or that he should pray to GOD to work a miracle, for the important purpose of destroying a combined army of presumptuous idolators; who, favoured by the darkness of the night, might have made their escape, or overcome the Gibeonites. Joshua's words, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou moon in the valley of Ajalon," seem to contradict what is now known concerning the motion of the earth: but the knowledge of astronomy can only be acquired by study, and in all ages the common people have been ignorant of it, and feeling no motion of the earth, but observing an apparent one of the sun, they have generally supposed that it actually makes a daily rotation round the world, and so produces alternate light and darkness. The Israelites, in the midst of war, had but little leisure for the cultivation of the sciences; had Joshua therefore said, "Stand still, O earth," the people would have thought him mad, as numbers would now suppose any
one

one to be who should endeavour to persuade them that the earth turns round upon its axis.

It certainly is very desirable to gain some knowledge of the science of astronomy, if circumstances will permit, because it elevates and expands the mind, and furnishes us with noble reflections: we must not however seek to learn it from the *SCRIPTURES*, for they treat of higher things: leading us to an acquaintance with the *GREAT CREATOR*, and teaching us how we may *serve him*, and obtain *eternal happiness*. So that when we meet with any expression contradictory to those discoveries which God has enabled *some part* of mankind to make for the general benefit concerning the laws of nature, we must always understand, that as the *Scriptures* were written for the *ignorant*, as well as the *learned*, God has graciously accommodated them to the capacity of the *humblest reader*, in order to prevent their being led away from things of real consequence, by speculations of no use to the lower kinds of people: and to make them contented with that degree of ignorance which is generally the lot of the laborious, by giving them, instead of scientific learning, the inestimable treasure of *Divine revelation*; by means of which they are taught, that the labour of the husbandman and the mechanic, are of the utmost benefit to society; and that faith and piety towards God, and honesty and kindness in their dealings with mankind, will render them acceptable to their Maker.

As all things are equally possible to the *SUPREME BEING*, there is no doubt but He could have ordered the conquest of the Canaanites without a miracle; but had not the attention of the Israelites been particularly directed to the all-powerful hand of *Divine Providence*, they might have attributed the victory to their own skill and courage. It has been mentioned before that it
was

was the custom with many of the idolators to worship the sun and moon; and there is reason to suppose that the very people with whom Israel fought were addicted to this species of idolatry, and perhaps had bowed down and worshipped these heavenly luminaries, invoking their assistance in the day of battle. If this was the case, nothing could so effectually evince the folly of their abominable superstition, and prove the supreme power of God, as arresting the apparent course of these imaginary Deities, and making them subservient and instrumental to the destruction of their infatuated worshippers.

SECTION XLI.

JOSHUA COMPLETES HIS CONQUEST.

From Joshua Chap. xi.

AND it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor had heard those things, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, and to the king of Shimron, the king of Achshaph, and to the kings that were in the north of the mountains, and of the plains south of Cinneroth, and in the valley, and in the borders of Dor on the west, and to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and to the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the mountains, and to the Hivite under Hermon, in the land of Mizpeth.

And they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea-shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many.

And when all these kings were met together, they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel.

And

And the LORD said unto Joshua, Be not afraid because of them: for to-morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire.

So Joshua came, and all the people of war with him, against them by the waters of Merom, suddenly, and they fell upon them.

And the LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them unto great Zidon, and unto Mizrephoth-maim, and unto the valley of Mizpeth eastward: and they smote them until they left them none remaining.

And Joshua did unto them as the LORD bade him: he houghed their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire.

And Joshua at that time turned back, and took Hazor, and smote the king thereof with the sword: for Hazor before-time was the head of all those kingdoms.

And they smote all the souls that were therein with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them; there was not any left to breathe: and he burnt Hazor with fire.

And all the cities of those kings, and all the kings of them, did Joshua take, and smote them with the edge of the sword, and he utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the LORD commanded.

But as for the cities that stood still in their strength, Israel burned none of them, save Hazor only; that did Joshua burn.

And all the spoil of these cities and the cattle the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves, but every man they smote with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them, neither left they any to breathe.

As

As the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua : he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses.

So Joshua took all that land, the hills and all the south country, and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same ; even from the mount Halack, that goeth up to Seir, even unto Baal-gad, in the valley of Lebanon, under mount Hermon : and all their kings he took, and smote them and slew them.

Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.

There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon : all other they took in battle.

For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses.

And at that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakims from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel, Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities.

There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel : only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod, there remained some of them.

So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses ; and the land rested from war.

And the number of kings which Joshua and the children of Israel slew on this side Jordan, was thirty and one.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Canaanites were very obstinate in making such resistance ; for we may judge, from the case of the Gibeonites, that if *other* nations would have humbled themselves, and embraced the true religion, they might have been spared, and perhaps they might have had better terms than the Gibeonites were allowed ; but they generally came out against Joshua first, and none would listen to conditions of peace.

It is supposed that Joshua's wars, though the history is comprized in so short a compass, lasted five years ; agreeably to the words of GOD, that he would "subdue the nations before them by little and little." Even the Anakims at length fell a prey to his victorious arms, notwithstanding they fortified themselves in the strongest manner, and made use, without doubt, of every stratagem they could devise. These were the men whose gigantic appearance struck such terror into the spies that searched the land in the days of Moses.

Thus the LORD drove out the nations from before his people, enabled them to smite the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and gave them possession of their land, according to His promise to Abraham.

We read that Joshua's army slew one-and thirty kings ; it seems that each of these presided only over one city and its towns and villages, and that when any one was in danger from an enemy, many of them united together for the common safety.

The punishment of the kings appears very severe ; but even the *crowned head* that exalteth *itself* against the LORD, deserves to be *laid low*.

SECTION XLII.

DIVISION OF THE LAND—CALEB OBTAINETH HEBRON.

From Joshua, Chap. xiii.

Now Joshua was old, and stricken in years ; and the LORD said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.

This is the land that yet remaineth ; all the borders of the Philistines, and all Geshuri. From Sihor, which is before Egypt, even unto the borders of Ekron northward, which is counted to the Canaanite : five lords of the Philistines ; the Gazathites, and the Ashdothites, the Eshkalonites, the Gittites, and the Ekronites ; also the Avites : From the south, all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that is beside the Sidonians, unto Aphek, to the borders of the Amorites : and the land of the Giblites, and all Lebanon toward the sun-rising, from Baal gad under mount Hermon, unto the entering into Hamath.

All the inhabitants of the hill-country from Lebanon unto Misrephothmaim, and all the Sidonians, them will I drive out from before the children of Israel : only divide thou it by lot unto the Israelites for an inheritance, as I have commanded thee.

Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal : and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of GOD, concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea.

Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to espy out the land ; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart,

Nevertheless, my brethren that went up with me
made

made the heart of the people melt : but I wholly followed the LORD my God.

And Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever ; because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God.

And now behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness : and now lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old.

As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me : as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out and to come in.

Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day ; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced : if so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said.

And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance.

Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day : because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel.

And the name of Hebron before was Kirjath arba, which Arba was a great man among the Anakims. And the land had rest from war.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As Joshua had attained a good old age, and had fought the battles of the LORD with so much intrepidity
and

and constancy, it was intended by his *Divine Commander* that he should be released from his labours ; and, after receiving the reward promised to him in the land of Canaan, that he should be removed to a still better place, and enjoy an *eternal* inheritance : previous to his departure from earth, he was required to settle the division of the conquered countries, and also of those which were yet unsubdued, but promised to their future conquest, if Israel continued faithful to the LORD. It was highly necessary that such a division should be made, as it was very unlikely that so large a body of people would agree if they had all things in common ; besides, they were to consider the country as an *inheritance*, because it was granted by GOD to their forefathers, who in consequence of this grant bequeathed it to their posterity.

Abraham left it to Isaac, Isaac to Jacob, and Jacob at his death was enabled, by the spirit of prophecy, to allot the different portions of each tribe : to the tribe of Judah he, by the LORD's direction, assigned a country abounding with vines and pasture grounds ; to that of Asher, one plenteous in oil, iron, and brass ; to that of Naphtali, one extending from the west to the south of Judea ; to that of Benjamin, one on which the temple of the LORD should afterwards be built ; to those of Zebulun and Issachar, such as had plenty of sea-ports ; to those of Simeon and Levi, no particular countries at all ; the former were to have a portion * with Judah, and the latter to be interspersed among the other tribes†.

Caleb's request plainly indicated, that his bravery and confidence in GOD remained unshaken, and that

* See Sect. liii. vol. i.

† The prophecy of Moses at his approaching death agreed with it. See Deuteronomy xxxii.

he

he valued the gift of God above all things; had he been worldly-minded, he would have solicited to be put in possession of a place already conquered, where he might pass the remainder of his days in peace and affluence; but he rather chose an inheritance that should distinguish him as the *faithful servant of the LORD*, and commemorate the action of his life for which he most desired to be esteemed, and serve at the same time to recommend his example to the imitation of posterity. It must have been delightful to behold this venerable man claiming the promised reward of his faith and piety; to hear him acknowledge the goodness of God to him from the day of his birth: though he had wandered with the rest, yet he continued healthy and strong, and was willing, by Divine assistance, to hold a contest with the giants, who at that time were in possession of the land.

Caleb is here called the Kenezite, perhaps on account of some victory he had gained over the Kenezites, who were descended from Kenaz, the son of Eliphaz, Esau's first-born.

Hebron was the place where Sarah died, and near it afterwards resided Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The preservation of Caleb and Joshua plainly proved that the LORD was *willing* to save those whom He redeemed from Egyptian bondage. All who died in the wilderness perished through their own disobedience. Nothing but wickedness can destroy the hopes of those who are taken into covenant with God: may then the examples of Caleb and Joshua encourage Christians to be steadfast and faithful in their attachment to the LORD, and in the discharge of those duties He has enjoined; then will they pass safely through the wilderness of this world, their old age will be honourable, and they will finally obtain their allotted inheritance.

SECTION

SECTION XLIII.

THE TABERNACLE SET UP AT SHILOH—LOTS CAST
FOR THE INHERITANCE*.

THE Tabernacle had hitherto continued in its usual situation, the centre of the camp of Israel; but as the people were allowed to disperse themselves, some on one side of Jordan, and some on the other, it was proper that a place should be appointed for the Tabernacle and the ark. GOD Himself directed in this matter, and SHILOH was fixed on, which was in the midst of the country, and very convenient for the assembling of the tribes. The ceremony of setting up the Tabernacle was doubtless performed with the utmost solemnity and joyfulness.

The countries that remained to be conquered lay at a distance; some parts were in possession of the Canaanites, who were not entirely rooted out, though they were so far conquered, that they were not able to make head and annoy the Israelites. The tribes of Reuben and Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, had been put in possession of their portion on the other side of Jordan; but seven tribes had not yet received any inheritance; they seemed inclined to live an inactive life all together: Joshua reproved them for not exerting themselves to extirpate the idolators entirely; and since GOD had permitted, nay commanded, them to do so, he desired them to send men to take a survey of the whole country which they were to attack; this they accordingly did, and those persons divided the

* See Joshua, Chap. xviii.

survey into seven parts, by cities, and brought the description of it to Joshua at Shiloh ; and he and Eleazar the high priest cast lots for them before the LORD in Shiloh.

How the business of casting lots was conducted is not exactly described ; but it is supposed that the names of the countries were written upon separate pieces, and put into the lap of Joshua, and that a prince of each tribe took a lot out of it containing the names of the countries which the tribe he drew for was to possess ; these shares the tribes were to consider as of the LORD's appointment, which indeed was evidently the case, for the portion of each tribe agreed with the original allotment which Jacob, by the Divine direction, made so many years before.* Joshua and Eleazar the priest were directed by the LORD to make such an equal division, that each tribe might have a territory proportionable to the number of its families, and each family in proportion to the number of its individuals. Thus "the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which He swore to their fathers to give them." Joshua himself had a little spot given him for his own habitation, not far from Shiloh.

When every thing was thus settled, Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and gave them an honourable dismissal. He acknowledged that they had faithfully executed the condition which they promised to Moses, in helping their brethren to subdue their enemies, and commended their courage and fidelity. He exhorted them, now they were going to separate from their brethren, never to neglect the service of GOD, but to keep His commandments with the most exact fidelity. He ad

* See Genesis, Chap. xlix.

vised them to distribute to their brethren on the other side Jordan, a share of the rich booty they had taken from the Canaanites, because, though the latter had helped them in the war, they had done them great service in protecting their families at home from the insults of enemies on every side. Joshua then gave them a solemn blessing, and sent them away.

The seven tribes did not immediately set about conquering the remainder of the Canaanites; after they had shewn their *willingness* to do it, the LORD gave them rest for a number of years, till their increasing numbers rendered it necessary to obtain greater extent of territory; in the mean while the Canaanites were permitted to remain in the cities and countries which the LORD's people did not immediately want, that they might not become desolate, or be filled with beasts of the field, for want of inhabitants; but the Canaanites were restrained from giving disturbance to those who were now the lawful owners of the land; having received it as the grant made for them to their progenitors, from the LORD of the whole earth.

The land of Canaan proved such as God had promised to give to his people, *flowing with milk and honey*, abounding, not only with necessaries, but delicacies; it was delightfully variegated with hills and vallies, enriched with corn and fruits, and stored with sheep and cattle. Canaan contained but a small tract of territory; the most authentic geographers tell us that it was 200 miles in length, and about 80 in breadth; but, notwithstanding the narrow limits, it was so wonderfully fertilized when the Israelites dwelt there, as to subsist a vast number of inhabitants. The air of this country was very temperate and serene, and the soil required scarcely any labour to manure it. In these days it ap-
pears

seems a poor barren spot ; this is in a great measure owing to the want of cultivation, but still more to the peculiar blessing of God being withheld from it.

SECTION XLIV.

JOSHUA'S EXHORTATION.

From Joshua, Chap. xxiii.

AND it came to pass, a long time after that the LORD had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed old, and stricken in age.

And Joshua called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age :

And ye have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto all these nations, because of you ; for the LORD your God is he that hath fought for you.

Behold, I have divided unto you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea westward.

And the LORD your God, he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight, and ye shall possess their land, as the LORD your God hath promised unto you.

Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom, to the right hand or to the left.

That ye come not among these nations, these that remain amongst you, neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them : But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day.

For the LORD hath driven out from before you great nations and strong; but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day.

One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your GOD, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.

Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your GOD.

Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you;

Know for a certainty that the LORD your GOD will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your GOD hath given you.

And behold, I am going the way of all the earth, and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your GOD spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.

Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your GOD promised you: so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your GOD hath given you.

When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your GOD, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them: then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you.

ANNOTATIONS

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We are not informed where Joshua was when he made this exhortation, but it is most likely that there was a general assembly of the people at Shiloh, to celebrate one of their great feasts: and that he took this opportunity of reminding them of their duty.

Israel had now had experience of the good things which the LORD had given them, and knew their value; but as continued prosperity is very apt to draw the mind from God, Joshua thought it necessary to admonish them, lest they should after his death commit those sins for which the LORD had threatened to send curses upon them. There is no need to enter into particular explanation of this pathetic address, as it is very easy to be understood, and will naturally suggest proper reflections.

SECTION XLV.

JOSHUA'S EXHORTATION—HIS DEATH—THE DEATH OF
ELEAZAR THE HIGH PRIEST.

From Joshua, Chap. xxiv.

AND Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before GOD.

And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah the father of Abraham and the father of Nachor: and they served other GODS.

And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land

of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.

And I gave unto Isaac, Jacob and Esau : and I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it ; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.

I sent Moses also and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did amongst them : and afterward I brought you out.

And ye went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho : and the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites and the Girgashites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I delivered them into your hand.

And I sent the hornet before you, which drave them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites ; but not with thy sword nor with thy bow.

And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them : of the vineyards and olive yards which ye planted not, do ye eat.

Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth : and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt ; and serve ye the LORD.

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD ; choose ye this day whom ye will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell : but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

And the people answered, and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods.

For the LORD our GOD, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of

of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed.

And the LORD drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God.

And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD; for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions, nor your sins.

If ye forsake the LORD and serve strange Gods, then he will turn and do you hurt and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the LORD.

And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD to serve him. And they said, we are witnesses.

Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel.

And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

And Joshua wrote these words, in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there, under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.

And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the LORD which he spake unto us; it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.

So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.

And it came to pass, after these things, that Joshua

the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.

And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Tinmath-serah, which is in mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash.

And the bones of Joseph which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver : and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.

And Eleazar the son of Aaron died ; and they buried him in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which was given him in mount Ephraim.

And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.

And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had known all the great work of the LORD, that he did for Israel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This was a very solemn assembly ; it consisted of the elders, heads, judges, and officers of the people of Israel, to whom Joshua in the name of the LORD gave his last exhortation. They met at Shechem, where Abraham settled at his coming to Canaan, and where God appeared to him ; it was therefore a very proper place to remind them of God's promises, and of their own engagements.

As it is said that the people *presented themselves before* God, we may conclude that there was a place of public worship at Shechem, though the ark of the LORD

was

was at Shiloh. The people were so convinced of the omnipresence of GOD, that they considered themselves *before the LORD* in a *spiritual sense* in these assemblies, in the same manner as we ought to do when we go to church. Joshua might with the greatest propriety address himself to the people in the LORD's name, as he spake agreeably to the written word of GOD; besides, as he was a prophet, it is most likely he had received commandment and was inspired to declare the will of the LORD at this time.

Joshua, like his predecessor Moses, exhorted the people most fervently to make returns of gratitude for GOD's mercies, and never to forsake His holy worship.

The Israelites were at this time in a very desirable disposition of mind; they repeated their resolution of perseverance, *willingly* submitting themselves to the worship of GOD alone, and entered into a solemn covenant, which Joshua recorded, and set up a memorial. It is not improbable that Shechem, on this solemn occasion, was sanctified by some *visible token* of the DIVINE PRESENCE, as it is called a *sanctuary*, though the ARK was at *Shiloh*.

By *the other side of the flood*, from which the forefathers of Israel are said to have been brought, is meant, the land of Mesopotamia beyond the river Euphrates, in which place idolatry greatly prevailed; therefore GOD's mercy to Abraham and his posterity was very great, in bringing him out of it; for though this patriarch was well *inclined*, bad example had probably much corrupted his manners. This spot where Joseph's bones were interred, was that which Jacob gave to him as his own peculiar inheritance.

While the stone remained as an *acknowledged monument of the COVENANT* entered into by the Israelites, it

was as efficacious as a *living witness*, to remind the people of the solemn engagement they had at that time made.

Joshua having performed his duty, as governor and leader of the Israelites, to the utmost that God required, without doubt took an affectionate leave of the people, before he departed to a happier state. This excellent man was remarkable for his steadfast attachment to God. *He remembereth his CREATOR in the days of his YOUTH*, and obtained the *blessing of the LORD*, which was shewn to him in a variety of instances; he was likewise happy in the people's love, and he had the satisfaction of beholding the efficacy of his good example in respect to religion.

Eleazar also led a pious life, and died an honourable death.

There are some parts of Joshua's exhortation, which claim our particular attention, as affording valuable instruction to *Christians*, as well as *Israelites*.

Fear the LORD (said he), *and serve him with SINCERITY and TRUTH*. It certainly is an heinous affront to the DIVINE MAJESTY to act the part of a hypocrite towards Him. The praise of the lips, without the homage of the heart, is an abomination in His sight.

Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. Thanks to the goodness of the LORD, in establishing His holy religion amongst us, we have no temptation to serve *heathen gods*; but we may make to ourselves *idols* of the *pomps* and *pleasures* of the world: let us therefore consider the blessings which attend a life of piety; the dangers we incur by a life of folly and dissipation; and the temptations to which we expose our children and dependants, by the neglect of *family devotion*; and surely we shall be all ready to say with Joshua, *As for me and my house we will*

will serve the LORD ; and with the Israelites, The LORD our GOD will we serve, and His voice will we obey !

It is very satisfactory to read an account of the fulfilment of the promises respecting the *Temporal Covenant*, as it is an earnest of the performance of those relating to the *Everlasting Covenant*. We shall be put in possession of an inheritance in the kingdom of Heaven, as surely as the Israelites received theirs in Canaan, if we are not wanting to ourselves ; but let us not forget that we have *vices to conquer* and *virtues to acquire*—an arduous task ! but such as the LORD will, through Divine grace, enable us to accomplish, if we are *strong* and *courageous* to perform what He requires on our part of the Christian covenant.

SECTION XLVI.

JERUSALEM AND OTHER CITIES TAKEN.

As the particular purpose for which Joshua was placed over the Israelites was accomplished by their obtaining rest in the land of Canaan, he did not, like Moses, name a successor ; and the most probable opinion is, that the people had no leader, but that the tribes were governed by their respective heads, or elders ; which form of government is supposed to have subsisted about thirty years. The LORD Himself was their king, and the high priest had the means of knowing God's holy will by URIM and THUMMIM. It has been already observed, that a great part of Canaan remained unconquered, and that the Canaanites did not dare to molest the LORD's people ; but it is likely that, after Joshua's death, they took courage, and supposed that they should now be able to resist the Israelites : whether this was the case, or not, is uncertain ; but we are told

that the tribes of Israel enquired of the LORD who should begin the war against them, and this preference was given to the tribe of Judah, who, in confederacy with that of Simeon, attacked Adonibezek, king of Bezek, a cruel monarch, who had cut off the thumbs and great toes of 30 captive kings, and obliged them to gather up their meat like dogs under his table. He was justly condemned to suffer the same fate*.

After the conquest of Bezek, the united tribes invested Jerusalem, and having taken it, they put the inhabitants to the sword, and set the place on fire. Here Adonibezek died. It is not improbable that he perished in the flames.

Caleb seems to have commanded the armies at this time, who next attacked Hebron; here they slew three giants, named Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai; having put Caleb in possession of Hebron, the armies proceeded against Debir, which was part of Caleb's lot.

The good old General had an only daughter, whose name was Achsah; he was desirous to see her married to a man of renown, and most likely Caleb knew that she had a similar wish; he therefore made proclamation in the camp, that whoever would attack and conquer Debir should be his son-in-law. This enterprize was undertaken and accomplished by Othniel, Caleb's nephew, whose valour received the promised reward: and at Achsah's request, Caleb gave a valuable portion with his daughter, consisting of a large tract of fertile and well watered land.

It is said, that the LORD was with Judah; and they drove out the inhabitants of the mountains, but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had *chariots of iron*. We must not suppose, that the LORD's power was not sufficient to defeat the warriors

* Judges Chap. i.

of the mountains; but it is likely, that the men of Judah had not sufficient confidence in Him to attack them, and declined the contest through fear and despondency.

After the Simeonites had assisted the tribe of Judah, they were in turn assisted by them, in taking Gaza, Askelon, and Zephah. Encouraged by these successes the family of Joseph took Bethel.

The other tribes had equally good success in gaining the possession of the lands that were allotted to them, only the tribe of Dan was compelled to quit the plains for fear of the Amorites, and to retire into the mountainous parts of the country, where they were pent up for some time till the family of Joseph came to their assistance; and having restrained the insolence of the enemy, reduced them to a narrower tract of a land than they had at first.

SECTION XLVII.

THE WICKEDNESS OF THE NEW GENERATION.

From Judges, Chap. ii.

AND an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up not of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.

And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice; why have ye done this?

Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be *as thorns* in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.

And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept.

And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.

And all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger.

And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them and sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

Whithersoever they went out the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

Nevertheless, the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hands of those that spoiled them.

And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD: but they did not so.

And

And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge ; for it repented the LORD because of their groanings, by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.

And it came to pass when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them ; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.

And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel ; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice ; I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died : that through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD, to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not.

Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily : neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.

Now these are the nations which the LORD left to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan ; only that the generations of the children of Israel might know to teach them war, at the least, such as before knew nothing thereof ; namely, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal hermon unto the entering in of Hamath.

And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

And

And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites.

And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served Baalim, and the groves.

Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia : and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years.

And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenez, Caleb's younger brother.

And the Spirit of the LORD come upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war : and the LORD delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand ; and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim.

And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenez died.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As their awakened consciences seem to have been so strongly affected with a sense of their ingratitude, when the ANGEL of the LORD appeared unto them at Bochim, one is surprised to read immediately after, of the Israelites forsaking the LORD ; but we find that there was a new generation, and there is reason to suppose that some time had elapsed before they arrived at such a pitch of wickedness ; and that they gave themselves up

to luxury and dissipation, became less attentive to the duties of religion, neglecting the worship of God, and so were easily drawn aside to the wicked abominations of their impious neighbours. It is said, they worshipped *Baalim*, which means not *one*, but idols in general. No wonder therefore that the LORD should withdraw His protection, and leave them a prey to their enemies: He did not however forget His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or his promises by Moses, but as soon as the Israelites came to a sense of their guilt, and called upon Him, the LORD had compassion on them, and raised up a deliverer, who was endued with skill and courage to lead them forth to victory, and obtain the blessings of rest and peace. The armies had not the power to *extirpate* the nations as Joshua had done, because infinite wisdom thought fit to ordain, that those who made so ill an use of abundance, should not be in a state of security, but suffered them to be tried by a variety of troubles, and to be exposed to many temptations, that they might be humbled for their sins, and reminded of their duty. Though this appears a hard sentence, it may justly be considered as an instance of the *mercy* of God towards the Israelites; for it was evident, that *adversity* was highly necessary to teach them repentance and humility, without which, they could not have the least pretence to God's favour. In the same manner, we may regard those disappointments and vexations which are often so grievous to ourselves as thorns in our sides, intended by the sufferings they occasion, to make us seek for relief from the goodness of God, or teach us to submit to evils with patience, since we must be conscious of deserving the utmost that is inflicted upon us.

SECTION XLVIII.

THE HISTORY OF THE DANITES—WAR WITH THE
BENJAMITES.

ABOUT the time of Othniel happened two very remarkable events. “The tribe of Dan, who dwelt in the mountainous parts, found their territories much too narrow for them; they therefore sent out five spies to survey the country, and bring them intelligence in what part of the regions round about they might most likely extend their bounds. The spies in their journey came to the house of Micah, of mount Ephraim, whose mother, thinking it too much trouble to go to Shiloh to worship and offer sacrifices, had made an *ephod* and a *teraphim*; priestly garments, and a graven image: and had consecrated one of Micah’s own sons to be a priest, until a Levite, who had dwelt some time in Bethlehem Judah, travelling from thence to seek a better settlement, happened to call at Micah’s house, and by him was hired to execute that office; and the man erroneously persuaded himself, that God’s blessing would certainly attend him, now he had engaged a Levite to be his priest. Some of the spies being acquainted with the Levite, and understanding in what capacity he served Micah, desired of him to *ask counsel of God* for them, whether they might promise themselves success in their present enterprize. He pretended to do so, and gave them great encouragement; and they proceeded in their search till they came to Laish, a pleasant and fruitful country, whose inhabitants lived in a secure and negligent manner, without any rule or discipline. The spies therefore returned, and represented the probability of this place becoming an easy conquest. Upon this the Danites drew a party of 600 men, and
sent

sent them to take possession of the city of *Lasish*; but in their way through mount Ephraim, they called at Micah's house, and in his absence seized the ephod, the teraphim, and other images, that Micah had made; and silenced the remonstrances of the Levite, by representing to him the advantage of being priest to a whole tribe, rather than to any one family, upon which he readily accompanied them. Micah returning home, and finding that his priest and images were gone, assembled his friends and pursued the Danites; but when he came up with the hindmost of them, they advised him to retreat, as they would certainly lose their lives in the contest; he therefore submitted to his loss, and the Danites on the third day came to Laish, burnt the city, destroyed the inhabitants, and took possession of the country.

“They rebuilt the city, calling it after their father Dan, and here setting up the image they had stolen, they made the Levite their priest; and in this state of idolatrous worship those Danites continued for about 300 years.”

A certain Levite, whose wife had eloped from him to her father's house, being willing to be reconciled to her, he went to bring her home; but in their return, being benighted, they were obliged to stop at Gibeah, “which belonged to Benjamin, and would have been destitute of lodging, had not a man, who did not properly belong to the place, offered them one, which they gladly accepted. Scarcely were they retired to rest, when the house was beset, and many outrages committed, which ended in a most cruel murder of the Levite's wife. Agitated (as we may suppose) with the most violent emotions, and thirsting for revenge, he thought of a strange expedient to attract the attention of the whole nation, which was to cut his wife into twelve parts, and

and send one part to each tribe, with an account of the inhospitable treatment he had met with at Gibeah, in order that it might be resolved in a general assembly of Israel, what step would be most proper to take on this dismal occasion.

The assembly agreed that such an inhuman act was deserving of the most condign punishment; they therefore sent messengers to Gibeah to demand the offenders, but they refused to deliver them, and mustered all their force to protect the criminals.

The army of the Benjamites contained only 26,000 men, that of Israel amounted to 400,000, yet the Benjamites obtained two victories; for the Israelites, confident of their own strength, placed no dependence on the aid of the ALMIGHTY: but ill fortune made them sensible of their presumption, and they humbled themselves to GOD, who then encouraged them to attack the Benjamites again, and their victory was complete; for they slew * 25,100, set fire to their city, and destroyed all that belonged to them. It so happened that 600 men, who were all that remained of the tribe, made their escape, and sheltered themselves in the fortress of Rimmon; had it not been for this remnant, the tribe of Benjamin would have been extirpated.

From these two events we may discover, that there was at that time great confusion in the land of Israel; and that the excellent form of government which had been ordained by Moses, at the command of GOD, was corrupted and disregarded.

In the war between the Benjamites and the other tribes, great losses were sustained on both sides; neither party had any reason to hope for the protection and assistance of GOD, and they were made instruments of punishment to each other.

* 25,100, Judges xx. 35.—25,000, Judges, xx. 46.

This and the foregoing story seem to have been inserted principally to shew, what a variety of ill effects were produced in Israel for want of a regular settled government; as it is repeatedly said, that they happened when *there was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes*. The Israelites had broken their covenant with God, and He had left them to themselves without any governor at all, to feel the sad effects of their presumption and self-dependance.

How thankful should those be who live in a kingdom blessed with laws calculated to defend the weak, protect the innocent, and punish injustice and violence; who have a good king, and magistrates of various ranks to put them in execution! Never should people in so happy a case indulge a wish to be at liberty to do every thing that may appear right in their own eyes; lest, enticed by faction, impelled by mistaken zeal, or hurried on by tumultuous passions, they should be led to break the command of God, subvert His holy religion, and infringe the peace of that society, of which they are members, for they may assure themselves that they will by such wickedness bring down God's judgments upon themselves.—War with a foreign enemy is a great evil, but lawless riot and intestine division are productive of the greatest misfortunes that can happen to any country, of which may we never be even spectators!

SECTION XLIX.

ISRAEL DELIVERED BY THEIR JUDGES.

In the days of Balaam the prophet, the Moabites were restrained by God, even from pronouncing curses on Israel*, but at length the Israelites committed so

* See Section xiii.

many abominations that the LORD was provoked to strengthen that very nation against them ! They were now obliged to pay a yearly tribute (a sum of money, or a certain portion of the product of the land) as an acknowledgment of submission to the king of Moab, and this for eighteen years together. The Israelites then returned to their duty, and GOD once more raised them up a deliverer in Ehud, whose errand it was to carry the annual present to Eglon, king of Moab.

Ehud provided himself with a dagger, and having obtained a private audience, he stabbed the king of Moab, and made his escape. When Ehud arrived at Mount Ephraim, he blew a trumpet, and assembled the Israelites, and said, Follow me, for the LORD hath delivered your enemies, the Moabites, into your hands ; and they went down after him, and slew of the Moabites about ten thousand of their most valiant men. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel, and the land had rest fourscore years*.

There is an appearance of great treachery in Ehud's proceedings in respect to the king of Moab, which nothing could justify, but his having received a command from GOD to destroy Eglon, in order to set Israel free ; therefore his example is not to be imitated in this particular.

We must remember that the Moabites practised open idolatry, and that Israel again obeyed the LORD ; as a reward for which, they had received repeated promises that their enemies should fall before them.

It is said that Ehud was of the tribe of Benjamin, and that he was left-handed ; therefore, in all probability, he was no expert warrior till strengthened of GOD, who chose a weak instrument in order to shew his own ALMIGHTY power.

* Judges, Chap. iii.

We may suppose that the king of Moab had triumphed over Israel, and exulted with pride at having subdued those who called themselves *the people of God*; and perhaps he imputed his success to the aid of the false deities he worshipped; at least we may be certain that he was guilty of *presumptuous sin*, or he would not have had such an exemplary punishment; and in respect to the Moabites, success was given to them for the punishment of Israel; when that purpose was completed, they were again exposed to the wrath of God, which had only been suspended, because those who were appointed to execute it had forsaken the LORD. The curse still remained in force against idolatry; and it was the peculiar service of the Israelites (when they were faithful to God) to punish those who acted in defiance of His ALMIGHTY power.

Ehud was succeeded by Shamgar, of whom little is said, but that he gained a very complete victory over the Philistines: this might happen during the life of Ehud, perhaps when he was too old for service, or in a different part of the territories of Israel.

It is said that he slew 600 men with an *ox-goad*; from which we may conjecture, that Shamgar and his men, being suddenly attacked, secured all the rustical instruments they had at hand, and without the usual arms (through the *power of the LORD*) defeated their enemies.

To what a deplorable situation had the Israelites reduced themselves by following false gods; they had no trade; and robbery was so frequent, that travellers were obliged to avoid the public road. The art of war was in a manner forgotten; and it is probable they had been deprived of all their spears and shields by the Philistines. Then did they call to mind the
blessing

blessing and the *curse* which the LORD had sat before them; and cried unto the LORD, who delivered them from their distress by the most unexpected means.

By the end of the fourscore years the people of Israel had again arrived at such a pitch of wickedness, that the LORD saw fit to punish them, by delivering them into the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, the captain of whose host was Sisera. He had under his command a very great army, in which were nine hundred chariots of iron; and for twenty years he mightily oppressed Israel*. Deborah the prophetess judged Israel at that time.

Deborah was a woman of extraordinary understanding and fortitude; she was likewise endued with the gift of prophecy, by which God enabled her to foretel some events which he intended shortly to bring to pass. Probably her wise admonitions inspired of God had brought the people to repentance: and they had recourse to her, in order to obtain advice, and to intreat her prayers to God in their behalf.

By the command of the LORD Deborah sent for Barak, and commanded him in the name of the LORD to assemble an army of ten thousand men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun, and go against Sisera, assuring him that the LORD would deliver Sisera into his hands.

Barak being diffident of himself, refused to go on this enterprize unless the prophetess would accompany him. This Deborah consented to do; but told him that for his distrust of the LORD, he should lose the honour of destroying Sisera, and a woman should obtain it.

Sisera hearing of the approach of Barak and the Is-

* Judges, Chap. iv.

raelites, assembled his warriors, and, at the head of a mighty army, went forth with all his chariots of iron to meet an enemy, whose forces appeared so inferior to his own, that, without doubt, he was confident of destroying them. Barak however, through the power of the LORD, obtained a complete victory. The army of the Canaanites was totally defeated, but Sisera escaped from the sword of Barak, and fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber. Jael received Sisera with pretended kindness, furnished him with refreshments, and afterwards, when he lay down to repose after the fatigue of the battle, she covered him with a garment; but as soon as he was asleep she took a large nail, and with a hammer drove it into his temple; and when Barak, who was in pursuit of him, arrived at Jael's tent, he found him dead. Thus was the prophecy of Deborah fulfilled, that *the LORD would deliver Sisera into the hand of a woman.*

In order to acquit Jael of treachery in this matter, we must remember that the Israelites were strictly commanded to cut off the idolatrous nations; that Sisera was condemned to death by the LORD himself, and Jael was ordained to execute the sentence. Jael was in a most critical situation. Had she refused to give shelter to Sisera, he would most probably have put her to death; or he might have found means, at a future time, to make head against Israel, and slaughter numbers of them; whereas, by cutting him off, Jael would complete the victory of Barak, fulfil the will of the LORD, and gain the highest honour, by delivering the people with whom her husband was in alliance from the dread of that furious general who had so long oppressed them.

This victory was celebrated in Israel with great triumphs

triumphs and rejoicings, and Deborah and Barak extolled the power and goodness of the LORD in a beautiful song*.

After this the Israelites had rest from their enemies forty years.

SECTION L.

THE HISTORY OF NAOMI AND RUTH.

DURING the forty years peace which succeeded the defeat of the Canaanites, the Israelites again rebelled against the LORD, and He punished them with a grievous famine. *Elimelech*, a man of Bethlehem, rather than submit to the affliction which God was pleased to bring on his people for their sins, resolved to leave his native country, and go with his wife Naomi and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, into the land of Moab. Elimelech's endeavours to preserve his life proved ineffectual; for though he escaped the famine, he died amongst strangers, and left his family exposed to a variety of inconveniences.

His sons, who probably looked upon Moab as their country, and who had been educated in a very different manner from what the law of God required, had no thoughts of returning to Bethlehem, but married two Moabitish women, named Orpah and Ruth; in a few years these young men also died.

It is very likely that Naomi might at first be willing to leave her country; but the loss of her husband and sons brought her to a sense of the crime she had committed in forsaking Judea, and going to live amongst idolaters; she therefore resolved to seek for pardon and peace, by returning to that society in which alone she could expect to enjoy them. She accordingly

* Judges, Chap. v.

communicated this intention to her two daughters-in-law, and, expressing the most fervent wishes for their happiness, bade them farewell. Both Orpah and Ruth were so affectionately attached to her, that they proposed to return with her to the land of Judah ; but as Naomi was sensible that this would expose them to many distresses, she generously declined the offer, and would not consent that they should go merely on her account, fearing that they were too much inclined to idolatrous worship to conform to the law of Moses.

Orpah finding from Naomi's discourse that she had little chance of obtaining a settlement in Judah, remained in Moab, paying however the tribute of many a tender tear for the kindness which she had received from her dear mother-in-law, and then took a last adieu.

Ruth was not to be hindered by any dissuasives from accompanying Naomi ; she expressed a fixed resolution to be a partaker of all her sorrows, to forsake idols, and become a true worshipper of the God of Israel. Naomi no longer resisted, she rejoiced to find that Ruth was converted, and now thought it her duty to endeavour to obtain a settlement for her amongst the Israelites. They immediately proceeded on their journey, and arrived at Bethlehem.

Those who had known Naomi in a state of affluence, were surprised at the change in her appearance ; but she acknowledged the justice of God, in bringing such distresses upon the family of Elimelech, on account of their joining themselves to an idolatrous nation from a distrust of Providence.

As Naomi had no son to claim the inheritance of his father, she was utterly destitute of the means of subsistence : Ruth therefore determined to exert her utmost industry, in order to procure a livelihood for them both ;

and as it was harvest time, she went into the fields in order to pick up the ears of corn that fell from the reapers' hands, which were the destined portion of the poor and needy: and the providence of God directed her to a part which belonged to Boaz, a man of considerable property, who was a near relation of Elimelech's, and a person of excellent character. He soon distinguished Ruth, and, making enquiries after her, was told the history of her exemplary conduct; upon which he addressed her with the utmost kindness, encouraging her to hope, that her dutiful behaviour to her mother-in-law, and her piety to God, would be rewarded.

He then gave orders that she should be treated with all possible respect, and allowed to refresh herself with his provisions; he also desired that the reapers would let fall handfuls on purpose for her; so that by the evening Ruth had gleaned three pecks of barley, with which she returned to her mother, who expected her with the utmost impatience; and when she heard how kindly Ruth had been treated by Boaz, the joy of her heart brake forth in thankful acknowledgments of the goodness of God! Naomi then formed hopes that Boaz might be induced to marry Ruth (notwithstanding the disparity of fortune), as she had a right to require him to do so, if he was, as she supposed him to be, the next of kin to her deceased husband; she therefore gave Ruth directions how to proceed according to the Jewish customs in such cases. Ruth punctually obeyed, and obtained a promise of the farther protection of Boaz, if another person, who he told her was a nearer relation than himself, should refuse to marry her, as he was very desirous to have a wife who had distinguished herself, as she had done, by her virtue and affection to her former husband. The other kinsman declined purchasing the inheritance of Elimelech by marrying his widow,

widow, as it was not agreeable to his interest to do so, he therefore resigned her to Boaz ; and Naomi had the felicity of rejoicing, not only in the marriage of Ruth, but in the additional comfort of a son which Boaz and Ruth were afterwards blessed with, who was named Obed. This child Naomi regarded as a blessing to herself, as he was entitled to the inheritance of Elimelech, according to the Jewish law.

Thus we find, that though it had pleased God to separate the Jews as a peculiar people ; yet the Gentiles or Heathens were not excluded from His grace, if they repented and were converted to His holy law. Worshipping idols was the cause of the LORD's forsaking them, but He was ready at all times to accept their repentance, of which Ruth is a remarkable instance ; for she was not only admitted into the society of God's people, but was honoured amongst those who are reckoned in the genealogy of the *promised Saviour*. Her son Obed was the father of Jesse, who was the father of king David.

SECTION LI.

GIDEON APPOINTED TO DELIVER ISRAEL.

From Judges, Chap. vi.

AND the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.

And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds.

And so it was when Israel had sown, that the Midian-

ites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; and they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.

For they came up with their cattle, and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude: for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it.

And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.

And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, because of the Midianites, that the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage,

And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land.

And I said unto you, I am the LORD your GOD, fear not the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.

And there came the angel of the LORD and sat under an oak, which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abi-ezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites.

And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, though mighty man of valour.

And Gideon said unto him, Oh, my lord! if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where

where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?

And he said unto him, Oh, my lord! wherewith shall I save Israel? behold my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.

And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me: depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again.

And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought in out unto him under the oak, and presented it.

And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh, and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so.

Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh, and the unleavened cakes: and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh, and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.

And when Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas! O LORD God! for because I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face.

And the LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not, thou shalt not die.

Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites.

And it came to pass the same night that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it; and build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down.

Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night.

And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built.

And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? and when they enquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing.

Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it.

And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death, whilst it is yet morning: if he be a God, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar.

Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar.

ANNOTATIONS

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In the days of Balak and Balaam, the people of Israel almost entirely destroyed the Midianites, but it is likely, that some of them saved themselves by flight into other countries, and that after the Israelites were settled in Canaan, they returned to their own country again, and in two hundred years they might have repeopled the land, and still retain the name of Midianites.

We are told an *ANGEL of the LORD* appeared unto Gideon, acquainting him that he was chosen to be the deliverer of Israel. He who assumed the form of an *Angel*, appears, by the subsequent conversation, to have been no other than the *LORD* Himself; but Gideon did not at first discover who talked with him; he seems to have thought that a prophet was sent to him; and being in great despondency of mind, he began to express his doubts of deliverance; the *LORD* then in *His own name* promised to save Israel, saying, *Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.* Gideon could scarcely believe that the *LORD* manifested *HIS DIVINE PRESENCE* in so humble a form, and that He had actually endued him with strength and abilities for the task required of him; he therefore asked for a sign that he might be convinced his imagination did not deceive him. Gideon then hastened into the house, and brought forth provisions to refresh his guest, should he prove to be a man, or to offer as a sacrifice, if he were the *LORD*. He had soon a very satisfactory sign, for his *present* was accepted as a *sacrifice*, which would not have been the case had the *ANGEL* been a *created being*. Gideon expressed his conviction, by crying out “Alas, O *LORD* God, for because I have seen the *ANGEL of the LORD* ;” upon which

the same DIVINE BEING, who had before *appeared*, spake to him words of consolation, assuring him, that he should not die. JEHOVAH SHALOM signifies the God of *peace*.

The reproof which Joash gave to the people for their foolish anger against Gideon, shews, that he was himself convinced that idolatry was a great sin; and that though he had been a priest of Baal, he now clearly perceived Baal must be an impotent Deity, since he had not been able to defend his own altar.

From this time, Gideon bore the name of *Jerub-baal*, that is, the opposer of Baal.

How deplorable was the condition to which the Israelites, through their apostasy, had reduced themselves! All those evils Moses had foretold fell upon them, because they forsook the LORD; and we may consider it as an instance of Divine mercy, that they were not totally extirpated; but the LORD had graciously promised, that if they would repent and seek His aid, He would return unto them, and deliver them for the sake of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, and in remembrance of His covenant; and we find in this section a remarkable proof of the faithfulness of GOD; for no sooner did His people *cry unto Him*, than He sent a prophet to remind them of His former mercies, and their breach of duty, in order to excite them to a thorough repentance. This should teach us to place a firm trust in the divine promises.

SECTION LII.

GIDEON REQUESTS ANOTHER SIGN—PREPARES FOR BATTLE.

From Judges, Chap. vi. vii.

THEN all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel.

But

But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him.

And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also was gathered after him, and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naph-tali, and they came up to meet them.

And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, behold I will put a fleece of wool in the floor: and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.

And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water.

And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece: let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.

And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.

Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early; and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.

And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midian-ites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him

return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand : and there remained ten thousand.

And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many, bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there : and it shall be that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee ; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.

So he brought down the people unto the water : and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself : likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.

And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men : but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand ; and let all the other people go every man unto his place.

So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets : and he sent all the rest of Israel, every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men. And the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.

And it came to pass the same night that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host ; for I have delivered it into thine hand.

But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host : and thou shalt hear what they say ; and afterwards shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with

with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host.

And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude.

And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and lo a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell and overturned it, that the tent lay along.

And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian and all the host.

And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise, for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers.

And he said unto them, Look on me and do likewise: and behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that as I do, so shall ye do.

When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD and of Gideon.

So Gideon and the hundred men that were with him came into the outside of the camp in the middle watch: and they had but newly set the watch, and they blew

the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands.

And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands, to blow withal : and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.

And they stood every man in his place round about the camp ; and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.

And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host : and the host fled to Beth-shittah, in Zererah, and to the border of Abel-meholah, unto Tabbath.

And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites.

And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together and took the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan.

And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb ; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew upon the wine press of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is here said that *the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon*, from which we may understand, that when the LORD

LORD required chosen persons to perform things above their natural abilities either of mind or body, he inspired them with supernatural powers,

As Gideon had collected together so numerous an army, he was desirous that they should have as satisfactory a proof as he had himself received, that he was appointed of GOD to be the deliverer of Israel; the sending dew on the fleece, and then inverting the sign agreeably to his request, shewed, that the LORD was actually with him, which was a great means of strengthening his own faith, at the same time that it awakened that of others.

Why it pleased God to appoint such an extraordinary method of electing the men who were to attend Gideon in his great enterprise, it does not concern us to know, because we shall never be in such circumstances as they were. It plainly appears that GOD intended to effect the destruction of the Midianites in a wonderful manner, so as to leave no one room to suppose his own skill or valour had gained the victory; and whatever directions seemed good to GOD's infinite wisdom to give, the Israelites were bound to obey.

It must astonish Gideon to hear the Midianites foretelling the success of his arms; he could impute the prediction he overheard to nothing but the inspiration of GOD for his encouragement.

It is very likely that, upon Gideon's great success, many of the soldiers whom he had lately dismissed were desirous to partake of the spoil, and for this purpose they willingly assembled together, and pursued after some of the Midianites, by which means two of the Generals fell into the hands of the Ephraimites, who guarded the river side in order to prevent their escape.

What consternation and amazement did this little troop

troop of 300 men occasion amongst the formidable army of the Midianites ! The terror of the LORD seized on their spirits, so that in their confusion they slew each other. The manner in which Gideon and his army were furnished for the battle, was expressive of the insignificance of the Midianitish hosts when fighting against the *sword* (that is the *power*) of the LORD.

We have here a fresh instance that *interpretations belong unto GOD*, for none but He, whose miraculous power was to effect it, could have enabled the Midianite to foretel such an improbable event as the overthrow of the Midianites by the sword of Gideon.

SECTION LIII.

THE EPHRAIMITES MURMUR—ZEBAH AND ZALMUNNA DEFEATED.

From Judges, Chap. viii.

AND the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites ? and they did chide with him sharply.

And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you ? is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer ? GOD hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb : and what was I able to do in comparison of you ? then their anger was abated towards him, when he said that.

And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them.

And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you,

you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me : for they be faint : and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.

And the princes of Succoth said, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army ? And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hands, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness, and with briers.

And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise ; and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered him.

And he spake also unto them of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.

Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their host with them, about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of all the host of the children of the east : for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword.

And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents, on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host : for the host was secure.

And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host. And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun was up, and caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and enquired of him : and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, even threescore and seventeen men.

And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold, Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me, saying, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy
men

men that are weary? And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness, and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth.

And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city.

Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? and they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king.

And he said, They were my brethren, even the sons of my mother: as the LORD liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you.

And he said unto Jether his first-born, Up, and slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he was yet a youth.

Then Zebah and Zalmunna, said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that were on their camels necks.

Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also; for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.

And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you.

And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house.

And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives.

And his concubine that was in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.

And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites.

And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that

that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god.

And the children of Israel remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side:

Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The men of the tribe of Ephraim were very jealous of Gideon, thinking he wished to exalt the tribe of Manasseh, to which he belonged, above them; and as they were both descendants of the patriarch Joseph, they thought they ought to be joint partakers of the honour of this memorable victory, not considering that it was Gideon's duty to act as God directed him.

Gideon kindly forgave their unjust suspicions, and by magnifying their exploits and speaking humbly of his own, he subdued their anger, and prevented the evil effects of dissension amongst brethren.

As Gideon and his little troop of warriors were faint and fatigued, they had a just claim upon all the Israelites who were able to supply them with food, and it must have been very mortifying to them to meet with a refusal from the men of Succoth. Those who could be so cruel as to withhold relief on such an occasion, deserved chastisement, for they must have been totally devoid of humanity, and destitute of faith in God. Most likely they were worshippers of Baal.

It appears by the questions which Gideon put to the two kings, that some of his brethren had been slain by them when they made their incursions into the land of Israel; he had a right to put them to death, according

to

to the laws then in force. Gideon's self-denial and humility towards the Ephraimites shew his character in a most amiable light; and the good effects they produced afford an excellent lesson, teaching us, that the best way to overcome envy and evil-will, is to resolve to act with mildness and temper, forbearing to recriminate and return those unjust reproaches that proceed from mistake and passion.

Gideon was, however, desirous of having something that might remain as a memorial of his late extraordinary victory: he therefore made an ephod in imitation of part of the sacred vestments worn by the priests, and placed it somewhere in Ophrah; soon after this he quitted public employment, and retired to his country-house: in all probability, Gideon left this ephod behind him, not in the least supposing it could produce any bad consequence; but some time afterwards, when the people were returning to idolatry, they began to imagine that God would answer them at Ophrah, where this ephod was, as well as at Shiloh, and so perverted it to a bad purpose: indeed he ought not to have made it. Gideon, in the latter part of his life, seems to have fallen into this mistake himself in some degree, which shews the ill effects of a bad education. He was the son of a priest of Baal; and, though converted by a *divine vision* to the *belief* of the *true God*, he might have neglected to inform himself of the *ceremonial part* of religion, and he probably remained satisfied with the rectitude of his intentions: this was a great fault in him, for he should have applied himself to the study of God's laws, in order to learn the whole of his duty: especially as the *temporal* happiness and prosperity of the people of Israel depended on a punctual observance of those ordinances which God had appointed.

As the people proved so ungrateful to God, no wonder

wonder that they should forget Gideon ; but they were at last severely punished for their *apostasy* and *ingratitude*.

SECTION LIV.

THE DEATH OF ABIMELECH—THE GOVERNMENT OF TOLA AND JAIR.

It was related in the foregoing section, that Gideon had several wives, and a great number of children ; as this was the case, his family could not be educated upon a very regular plan ; and we may suppose that there were among them, in a variety of instances, envy, jealousy, and discontent, even during his life-time ; but the Israelites had learnt the custom of having a plurality of wives from their idolatrous neighbours, for it was quite contrary to the law of God (which from the beginning required that a man should have only one*), and it was a great means of bringing down his judgments upon them.

Gideon had in all seventy sons ; one of them, named Abimelech, was of an ambitious aspiring temper, and his mother's family had great interest in Shechem ; he therefore, after his father's death, endeavoured to get himself made king : his relations encouraged him : and that he might not want money to carry on his design, they furnished him with some out of the treasury of the idol Baal-berith, with which he hired a number of profligates to attend him. With these supplies, he repaired to his father's house ; and having seized all his brethren, excepting Jotham the youngest, who made his escape, he slew them all upon one stone, and then returned to Shechem, where, instead of meeting with the

* See Gen. ii. Matth. xix.

detestation his crime deserved, he was in a general assembly elected king.

When young Jotham heard of this, he ascended mount Gerizim, which overlooked Shechem, and calling on the inhabitants of the city to attend to him, he proposed a fable to them*, by which he attempted to convince them of their folly in choosing a man for their king, who was no more able to protect them than a bramble is to cover with its branches other trees that should resort to it; and also to recal to their minds his father's modesty and self-denial, in refusing to have the government which they had now conferred on one, as much inferior in virtue and honour to Gideon and his deceased sons, as the bramble is to the olive-tree, the fig-tree, and the vine.

Jotham then expostulated with them on the injury they had done his family, and upbraided them with their ingratitude to his father's memory, appealing to their own consciences, whether they had done right or not; he then denounced a curse against them, to the following effect, *Let fire come out of Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech.*

Having thus expressed his sentiments to the Shechemites, Jotham made his escape to Beer, where he lived secure from Abimelech's rage; and it was not long before his curses, which seem to have been *prophetical*, began to operate; for the people of Shechem, growing jealous and distrustful of their new king, were for killing him, which made him leave the place, and escape for his life. As soon as he was gone, they

* See Judges ix. 8, &c.

set up another vile wretch, named Gael, to be their governor. Abimelech soon after stormed the place where Gael was, and killed all the inhabitants that came in his way; and some of them having taken shelter in a fort belonging to the temple of their idol Baal-berith, he set fire to it, and destroyed them all together.

Soon after he attempted to burn two other towns; but while he was encouraging them to set the gate on fire, a woman threw down a piece of a mill-stone upon his head, and fractured his skull.

Though Abimelech was sensible that he had received a mortal blow, and must soon expire, he did not discover any remorse for his crimes, but spent his last thoughts on a trifling concern for his fame; being shocked by nothing but the fear that it would be reported that he lost his life by the hand of a woman; this proceeded from a *false notion of honour*, founded on *pride*; and many persons, even at this day, entertain sentiments of a similar nature; but CHRISTIANITY teaches better principles, and shews that nobleness of mind consists in supporting disgrace with fortitude and resignation.

The act of which Abimelech was guilty in slaying his brethren, proves that he was of a most savage disposition. The tribes were quite passive on this occasion, from whence we may infer, that they had lost all sense of honour and liberty, justice and gratitude; they had quite extinguished among them the spirit which led them to take such vengeance on the Benjamites, for the murder of one woman, or they certainly would have united to put to death a person, who, without any provocation, was so unnatural as to massacre sixty eight of his own brethren.

It is thought the Shechemites assembled for the pur-
po

pose of electing Abimelech at the very place where the stone had been erected in memory of the covenant which the Israelites made with the LORD when Joshua delivered his last exhortation to them.

Abimelech's reign proved both *thorny* and *short-lived*, and he verified the prediction of Jotham concerning him; for in the space of three years, he and the Shechemites were fire brands to each other.

The house of Millo, which joined with the Shechemites, is supposed to have been all the kindred of Abimelech's mother.

Abimelech was succeeded in the government of Israel by Tola, who was a man of a very prudent and peaceable disposition, and very capable of reforming abuses, and appeasing tumults in the state; it is related of him that he judged Israel 23 years, and that he lived and died in peace, from whence we may infer that he was an enemy to idolatry.

After the death of Tola, Jair governed Israel. He appears to have been intent on aggrandizing his own family, who lived in the utmost magnificence; for it is related, that he had thirty sons, who rode on thirty ass colts, and that each son had a city. Though * asses are with us condemned to the most servile employments, and it is thought disgraceful for any person above the lowest rank to mount them, they were at that time of great estimation, and bore on their backs kings and nobles; for the Israelites had an express command *not to multiply † horses to themselves*, because they were under the immediate direction of God; and He promised, *that he would be to them instead of horses and chariots*; and it is evident, from the Jewish history, that this law was observed; for when Joshua prevailed

* Sherlock's Dissertations.

† Deut. xvii. 16.

against the Canaanites, and took from them many horses and chariots, he was commanded *to hough or ham-string the horses, and burn the chariots with fire* ; and when Barak and Deborah delivered Israel from Sisera, who had nine hundred chariots of iron, it is expressly said that *Barak was sent on foot into the valley* ; for God had taken the defence of Israel upon himself, and whenever the people took it out of his hands and placed it in their own, they were sure to be undone ; for the LORD of Hosts wanted neither horse nor foot to fight His battles.

During the government of Jair the people went greatly astray, worshipping all manner of idols that were amongst the neighbouring people ; by this means they not only provoked God, but exposed themselves to the derision and contempt of all the world, as it proved the fickleness of their tempers.

SECTION LV.

JEPHTHAH APPOINTED TO DELIVER ISRAEL.

From Judges Chap. x, xi.

AND the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him.

And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon.

And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel eighteen years, all the children of Israel that
were

were on the other side Jordan, in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead.

Moreover, the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed.

And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, we have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim.

And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines?

The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites did oppress you, and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand.

Yet ye have forsaken me and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go, and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen: let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.

And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day.

And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.

Then the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled themselves together, and encamped in Mizpeh.

And the people and princes of Gilead said one to another, What man is he that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

Now

Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of Gilead. And Gilead's wife bare him sons: and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of a strange woman.

Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him.

And it came to pass, in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel. And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob.

And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon.

And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house? and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?

And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the LORD deliver them before me, shall I be your head?

And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The LORD be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words.

Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and

phthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We find from this section, that the corruptions, which began to take place in the time of Jair, grew to so enormous a height, as to bring down the anger of God, who suffered the Israelites to be greatly oppressed. They seem to have been uncommonly humbled by this affliction, and to have repented with that contrition and sincerity, which are pleasing to God; who is said to have felt such compassion for them, *that His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel*. From what has been observed before, concerning God's *repenting*, &c. we may understand, that the ALMIGHTY shewed such kindness towards the Israelites, as effectually comforted, relieved, and encouraged them; in the same manner as the sympathizing tenderness of a benevolent and powerful friend softens calamity, and restores peace and happiness to the afflicted heart. We must not suppose that God really felt grief, for this can never happen.

Prudence required that Jephthah should make conditions for his own security, as he had received ill usage sufficient to justify his suspicions, that the Gileadites would be regardless of his interest, when their own turn was served. The Gileadites certainly had no right to expect services from him, and it was a reasonable demand of Jephthah's, that the government, with which he was to be invested for their benefit, should be continued during his life. The people at this time seem to have entertained the highest opinion of his merit, they therefore agreed to his terms, and ratified the bargain with an oath. Jephthah likewise *uttered his words before the LORD*, by which is meant, that he called God to

to witness his intention to do all in his power for their relief; trusting in the aid and protection of the LORD of Hosts, the mighty God of Israel.

What various reverses of fortune did Jephthah experience! During his earliest years, we may suppose, he enjoyed peace and plenty, for it seems that he was treated like the rest of his brethren, and his father intended he should be an inheritor with them. It was a severe and cruel stroke to be condemned, for the faults of his mother, to quit a life of affluence for a state of exile; and to be reduced to the necessity of gaining a precarious livelihood amongst a set of outcasts, who most likely supported themselves by hunting and taking wild beasts, or making incursions on those parts of Canaan which were not yet conquered. In a short time, behold, the very man, so lately abandoned by his own relations, solicited to become the judge and commander of those very people, who had treated him with so much scorn and contempt! This incident affords an useful lesson, to all who find themselves inclined to behave towards any of their fellow creatures with arrogance and injustice.

SECTION LVI.

JEPHTHAH'S RASH VOW.

From Judges, Chap. xi.

AND Jephthah sent messengers unto the king of the children of Ammon, saying, What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come against me to fight in my land?

And the king of the children of Ammon answered unto the messengers of Jephthah, Because Israel took away my land when they came up out of Egypt, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan. Now therefore restore those lands again peaceably.

And Jephthah sent messengers again unto the king of the children of Ammon ; and said unto him, Thus saith Jephthah, Israel took not away the land of Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon.

Wherefore I have not sinned against thee, but thou dost me wrong to war against me ; the LORD the Judge be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon.

Howbeit, the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah, which he sent him.

Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon.

And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then shall it be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.

So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them ; and the LORD delivered them into his hand. And he smote them from Aroer even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances : and she was his only child ; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.

And it came to pass when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas ! my daughter, thou hast brought

brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back.

And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon.

And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: Let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.

And he said, Go; and he sent her away for two months, and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains.

And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed. And it was a custom in Israel, that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As Jephthah was *a chosen servant of the LORD*, as well as *the approved judge of Israel*, it pleased the LORD to send His *Spirit* upon him; by which is to be understood, that GOD endued him with every requisite qualification for the important and honourable employment; and by this means, Jephthah gained a glorious victory; but his triumph, we find, was clouded by a melancholy event, occasioned by his making an inconsiderate vow. It is a very affecting story, and cannot be read without painful emotions.

How must it rend the heart of a fond parent, to think

of taking away the life of his only child, who appears to have entertained the utmost reverence and affection for him; who, thoughtless of danger, came forth to meet her honoured parent, with every demonstration of joy and thankfulness to heaven for his success and preservation; expecting to be pressed to his fond bosom, and hoping to reward his toils with assiduous duty!

What must be the agitation of her mind, when she beheld him turning from her in an agony of distress, and heard him declare her unhappy fate, to which his own rashness had exposed her: for *he had opened his mouth to the LORD, and could not go back!*

Jephthah's daughter certainly was possessed of uncommon fortitude of mind; for she submitted to this sudden and heavy calamity with the utmost calmness and resignation; willing to suffer any misfortune, rather than her father should be guilty of impiety to God; she only requested to be indulged with a short respite, in order perfectly to reconcile herself to the disappointment of dying without leaving a family, which was reckoned by the Jewish women the greatest disgrace that could befall them; because every one hoped that she might be the mother of some great deliverer at least, if not of the promised SAVIOUR.

When the dreadful news was known to the young companions of this amiable young lady, pierced with severe grief, they doubtless threw aside the instruments of mirth, with which they came to welcome the conqueror, and changed their songs of triumph for tears and lamentations: willing to enjoy her conversation to the last, they accompanied her to a place of retirement, where she might effectually wean her thoughts from this world, and prepare for eternity.

Human sacrifices were strictly forbidden, particularly those of a person's own children: not only because
such

such cruelty is displeasing to a God of infinite mercy, but likewise on account of its resembling the horrid practice of the idolatrous nations. There was little chance that an ox, a lamb, &c. should be the first to meet their master; therefore it appears probable, that Jephthah had learnt during his exile, or before the last repentance of Israel, the sacrifices in use by the heathens, and really *intended* to offer a *human victim*; and that God taught him to understand the enormity of this horrid crime, by suffering him to be involved in such extreme distress; for he was under the necessity, either of taking away the life of his only child, of inflicting a disgraceful punishment on her worse than death; or else of exposing himself to the curse of God for breaking a vow, made with the utmost solemnity.

This part of the history of Jephthah teaches us, that we ought to weigh well the lawfulness of any action, before we engage ourselves solemnly to the performance of it: had Jephthah done so, he would have recollected, that as there were certain species of animals, appointed by the Lord for sacrifices, any other kind of creature would have defiled the altar, because God had expressly named those he would accept.

Whatever was the fate of Jephthah's daughter, whether she resigned her pious soul as a voluntary sacrifice in acknowledgment of God's mercy in preserving her father, and delivering her country; or whether (as is the general opinion) she relinquished the hopes of having an honourable offspring, and passed the remainder of her days in solitary sadness, she certainly has left us an example of filial piety of the most exalted kind, and every dutiful child will read and admire it; whilst those who are unmindful of their parents' happiness, and unthankful for the blessings which paternal love dispenses, ought to blush with shame and con-

fusion, when conscience obliges them to draw a comparison between themselves and Jephthah's amiable daughter.

SECTION LVII.

JEPHTHAH'S RESENTMENT AGAINST THE EPHRAIMITES—HIS DEATH.

From Judges, Chap. xii.

AND the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? we will burn thine house upon thee with fire.

And Jephthah said unto them, I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon; and when I called you, ye delivered me not out of their hands.

And when I saw that ye delivered me not, I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the LORD delivered them into my hand: wherefore then are ye come up unto me this day, to fight against me?

Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim, among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites.

And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped, said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, nay: then said they unto him,

him, Say now Shibboleth : and he said Sibboleth ; for he could not frame to pronounce it right.

Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan : and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.

And Jephthah judged Israel six yeers : then died Jephthah, the Gileadite, and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jephthah belonged to the tribe of Manasseh, with whom Ephraim claimed kindred ; it was on this account that the Ephraimites were enraged with jealousy ; for though they had not shared the danger, they were desirous of partaking the honour of the victory, and of dividing the spoils. As the Ephraimites began the quarrel, they had none to blame for the consequences of it but themselves ; their displeasure against Jephthah was extremely unreasonable, it proceeded from pride and envy ; besides, there was impiety mixt with their crime ; for Jephthah assured them, that it was the LORD who had given the victory, they should therefore have been thankful for the general deliverance of Israel, and ready to pay respect to that commander whom the LORD so highly honoured.

It must doubtless be very mortifying to Jephthah to be insulted in such opprobrious terms, by those from whom as a kindred tribe he might naturally expect peculiar congratulations.

Jephthah certainly carried his resentment to a great extreme ; but though it is said that *the Spirit of the LORD came on him*, that is, strengthened him for the employment he was appointed to, we are not to suppose that he was a perfect character, or in all respects in-

fluenced by God; on the contrary, we lately read of a shocking instance of his precipitation. The quality for which he was eminently distinguished was *valour*. He appears to have had strong, but mistaken notions of piety; and as he was unacquainted with the *law of God* in one particular, it is likely he was deficient in all; if therefore he was led by the corrupt notions he had taken up from the heathens, to the *intention* of offering a human sacrifice to the *God of Israel*, he might from the same ignorance or false principles, pursue the Ephraimites with too great inveteracy, therefore his example is unfit for the imitation of Christians. Had Jephthah lived when the law of Moses was the rule of life, we may reasonably suppose he would have been a faithful observer of it. He gives a striking instance of the degeneracy of Israel in his time.

It is most likely, that though badly educated, Jephthah was well inclined; and that God, who knoweth the secret dispositions of every heart, selected him as the most proper person to have the supreme authority, and as we read of no more blameable actions, in all probability he spent the remainder of his life in reforming his own heart, and restoring the true worship of God.

Only six years Jephthah judged Israel; perhaps grief for the loss of his daughter, which must have been severely felt when the return of peace gave leisure for the indulgence of domestic pleasures, shortened his days.

The meaning of the word *shibboleth* is *river* or *stream*. Though all Israel spoke *Hebrew*, each tribe might have a particular dialect, as the different counties have amongst us, so that persons who lived at a distance were often in a great measure unintelligible to each other, as is frequently the case in England.

Let us remember that the crimes for which such severe

vere punishment was suffered to fall on the Ephraimites, were, *impiety, envy, pride, arrogance, and a spirit of ingratitude.*

Jephthah was succeeded by Ibzan of Bethlehem : he had a very numerous issue, thirty sons and thirty daughters, whom he lived to see married, and settled in different places ; he judged Israel seven years. After Ibzan, Elon a Zebulonite was judge for ten years, when he died, and Abdon governed Israel, who was famous for the number of his offspring, which were forty sons and thirty *grandsons*. There is reason to suppose that Abdon had contests with the Philistines ; but we do not find that there was any war or internal commotions during the lives of these three last judges : the swords of Gideon and Jephthah had probably intimidated their enemies, and the Israelites did not provoke the LORD by idolatrous practices.

SECTION LVIII.

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARETH TO MANOAH
AND HIS WIFE—THE BIRTH OF SAMSON FORETOLD.

From Judges, Chap. xiii.

AND the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah, and his wife had no children.

And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Beware, I pray thee, drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing.

For lo, thou shalt bear a son, and no razor shall come

on his head : for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from his birth : and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines.

Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible : but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name.

Then Manoah intreated the LORD, and said, O my LORD, let the man of God which thou didst send, come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.

And God hearkened unto the voice of Manoah ; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field : but Manoah her husband was not with her.

And the woman made haste, and ran, and shewed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day.

And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman ? And he said, I am.

And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass : How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him ?

And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman, let her beware.—All that I commanded her let her observe.

And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee.

And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread : and if thou wilt offer a burnt-offering, thou must offer it

it unto the LORD: For Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the LORD.

And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass, we may do thee honour?

And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?

So Manoah took a kid, with a meat-offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the LORD: and the angel did wondrously, and Manoah and his wife looked on.

For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar: and Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground.

(But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife.) Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the LORD.

And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would, as at this time, have told us such things as these.

And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him.

And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Philistines were descended partly from Casluhim, and partly from Caphtorim, two sons of Misraim the son

son of Ham. They came originally from Egypt, and removed to the southward of the land of Canaan. In process of time, they made inroads upon Canaan, and in Abraham's days they had got possession of some parts which lay along the Mediterranean sea: this tract of ground was divided into five principalities or little kingdoms, called Gaza, Askelon, Ashdod, Gath, and Akron.

The Philistines were a very warlike people, and in the days of Abraham and Isaac they were a hospitable nation; and being originally descended from a son of Noah, they must at first have known the true God; but they became like other idolatrous nations, and then their arrogance and ambition were great, and their enmity to Israel irreconcilable. The Israelites had received a command to destroy the Philistines; but on their breaking the covenant, God's anger was kindled, and He resolved that the Philistines and others should be left to *prove* His people; and they were at times extremely oppressive and vexatious, as we shall find in the course of the history.

We may suppose that the Israelites now began to repent as formerly, when afflictions made them consider the cause of their calamity, therefore it pleased God to raise up a person to *begin* their deliverance.

It was the will of God that Samson should be a Nazarite from his birth. A Nazarite was one who, under the Jewish law, made a vow of particular purity, and separated himself in an extraordinary manner for the service of God. During this time the person abstained from wine and all strong liquors, did not cut his hair, nor come near a dead body: after the time of his separation was ended, he offered such sacrifices as the law required, and returned to Society.

It is likely that the LORD testified his acceptance of
Manoah's

Manoah's sacrifice, by sending fire to consume it. Manoah felt immediate conviction that God had revealed Himself as He had done to other chosen persons, and he was seized with the utmost apprehension that he should not long survive it. Manoah's wife had much more composure of mind, and she expressed it with the utmost propriety.

We may reasonably suppose, that as Manoah and his wife had entered into a covenant with the LORD, in Samson's name, they acquainted him, as soon as he was capable of understanding them, with the conditions on which the Lord had promised to give him extraordinary endowments—That he was to regard himself as a person chosen of God to begin to deliver Israel—that the *spirit* or *power* of the LORD would always *assist* him in the work, provided he observed the rules which were required of him, that he might be distinguished for the sanctity of his life, and so contribute by his example to the reformation of that people he was born to deliver.

SECTION LIX.

SAMSON'S MARRIAGE—HE KILLETH SOME OF THE
PHILISTINES.

From Judges, Chap. xiv.

AND Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman at Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.

And he came up and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife.

Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren,

thren, or among all thy people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.

But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines; for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and behold, a young lion roared against him.

And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand; but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.

And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well: And after a time, he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion; and behold there was a swarm of bees, and honey in the carcase of the lion.

And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told them not that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion.

So his father went down unto the woman, and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do. And it came to pass when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.

And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: If ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets, and thirty changes of garments;

But if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me
thirty

thirty sheets, and thirty changes of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it.

And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three day expound the riddle.

And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire : have ye called us to take that we have ? is it not so ?

And Samson's wife wept before him and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not : thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me.

And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell thee ? And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted : and it came to pass on the seventh day that he told her, because she urged him : and she told the riddle to the children of her people.

And the men of the city said unto him that on the seventh day before the sun went down, What is sweeter than honey ? and what is stronger than a lion ? and he said unto them, If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle.

And the spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house.

But Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is most likely, that when Samson went to Timnath, the LORD inspired him with a desire of seeking occasion to try his strength on the Philistines: but he suffered himself to be diverted from his purpose.

If the Philistines considered him as their professed antagonist, their triumph must have been great on his wishing to form an alliance with them; but Samson's indiscretion could not counteract the will of the LORD, who ordained that this very marriage should be a means of punishment to the Philistines: Samson was therefore permitted to pursue his design, and his father and mother, indulgent to a faulty degree, gave way to his earnest solicitations.

Samson's slaying a lion without the assistance of any weapon, was an earnest to him of the conquests he might expect to gain over the Philistines, by the assistance of the same *Divine Power*; and his finding honey in the carcase afterwards, might be intended as an assurance that his courage should not go unrewarded.

It was customary in those days, at festive entertainments, for the company to amuse themselves with proposing and explaining difficult questions: Samson, in compliance with this custom, gave his guests a riddle, promising gifts to those who could solve it: indeed it was so strange a one, that neither learning nor ingenuity could have discovered the meaning of it; but it answered the purpose of proving whether the attendants on the marriage were friends or enemies. Samson's wife proceeded with great artifice; but the event discovered her treachery, and he resolved to be revenged: his wrath proved instrumental to the design
of

of God respecting the destruction of the Philistines, and *supernatural strength* was granted to him.

Whether Samson's wife was influenced by fear, or led by inclination, is difficult to determine; but we may suppose, that she could promise herself no great felicity with him, after his discovery of her treachery; and it is likely her relations were averse to her living with him. Her conduct is not to be justified; but we should consider that she belonged to one of those nations in which all kinds of wickedness were practised, whose inhabitants educated their children according to their own bad principles.

Samson evidently did not act from a *pious*, but a *selfish* motive; but the SUPREME BEING can order the unruly passions of men to be subservient to his purposes; and often does so, particularly in the punishment of the wicked; for one sinner, or nation of sinners, is frequently made a scourge to another, as in this instance.

SECTION LX.

**SAMSON'S REVENGE AGAINST THE PHILISTINES—HE
BURNS THEIR CORN—SLAYS A THOUSAND WITH
THE JAW-BONE OF AN ASS—SUFFERS EXTREME
THIRST.**

From Judges, Chap. xv.

BUT it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat-harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go to my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in.

And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her: therefore I gave her to thy companion:

panion : is not her younger sister fairer than she ? take her, I pray thee, instead of her.

And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure.

And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took fire-brands, and turned tail to tail, and put a fire-brand in the midst between two tails.

And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives.

Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this ? and they answered, Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he hath taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire.

And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease.

And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter. And he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam.

Then the Philistines went up and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi.

And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us ? and they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us.

Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us ? what is this that thou hast done unto us ? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them.

And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee

thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me that ye will not fall upon me yourselves.

And they spake unto him, saying, No: but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock.

And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that is burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands.

And he found a new jaw-bone of an ass, and put forth his hand and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.

And Samson said, With the jaw-bone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men.

And it came to pass when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jaw-bone out of his hand, and called that place Ramath-lehi.

And he was sore athirst, and called on the LORD, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant, and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?

But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout: and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived. Wherefore he called the name thereof En-hakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is most likely that Samson did not know that his wife was given to another, and that his affection for
her,

her, which appears to have been great, again took place when his rage subsided ; the present of a kid was probably a token of reconciliation according to some prevailing custom.

The method of revenge which Samson made use of, as expressed in our Bibles, is very difficult to account for, though some of the learned have endeavoured to reconcile it by various arguments. An author* well skilled in the Hebrew language says, that the word translated *foxes* may be rendered *wheat-sheaves* ; and then we easily suppose, that if Samson and his attendants set a number of these on fire, the flames might communicate from place to place, and cause a general conflagration. There was however great barbarity in the action, which nothing could justify but a general commission from God Himself, to use every means of annoying the Philistines ; particularly by destroying their corn, wine, and oil, as they were unthankful to the LORD for those blessings, and even devoted part of them to the honour of idols in their abominable rites.

The treachery of Samson's wife was soon punished, for the Philistines, regarding her as the occasion of Samson's enmity to them, burnt her and her father to death : so that she met with the very fate, to avoid which she had betrayed her husband.

Samson seems to have understood that the Philistines meant to soften his resentment by this act ; but he assumed the character which properly belonged to him of the instrument of Divine vengeance against them, and made a desperate attack on them.

One would suppose, that with such a valiant commander as Samson, the men of Judah would have gladly embraced the opportunity which offered to shake

* Dr. Sharpe's Introduction to Universal History.

off the Philistine yoke ; but they had debased themselves to such a degree with their idolatrous practices, that they appear to have had no courage left, and were dispirited and sunk to the most abject meanness ; reconciled servitude, contented to pay tribute to the Philistines, and ready to submit to any indignity, rather than make an effort to recover their liberty. Blind to their own interest, the Israelites gave up their champion into the hands of the Philistines, who, without doubt received this mighty captive with transports of joy ; exulting in their own safety, and the hopes of revenge for the injuries they had sustained from his hand. Their security however was of short duration, and the Philistines once more beheld their formidable enemy at liberty, fired with rage at the indignities offered to himself, and urged by the *Divine impulse* to destroy the worshippers of Dagon, that *mock deity* which they had exalted in their impious abominations above the only *true and living God*. Samson had neither sword to attack them, nor a shield to defend himself, but stood alone, opposed to thousands ; yet, *with the jaw-bone of an ass he slew a thousand men*. This may be thought very improbable ; but we must consider, that though Samson in many instances was extremely faulty, he did not forsake the worship of God, and join with idolaters ; but observed the Divine command in respect to abstaining from wine, and in suffering his hair to grow ; he was therefore, by these marks, distinguished as the *servant of God* in respect to the destruction of the Philistines ; and he had reason to expect the aid of the LORD, whenever he attacked them ; so that we need no longer wonder, that his enemies, however numerous, lay dead at his feet.

Samson seems to have been greatly elevated with this victory, for he *boasted* of his mighty deeds, forgetful

ful of the aid of the LORD, to which he ought to have imputed them ; but he was soon reminded of his own natural infirmity, for he suffered the most extreme thirst, which humbled his spirit, so that he thankfully acknowledged the goodness of GOD, and intreated the LORD to compassionate his present sufferings : his prayer was heard, and a miracle wrought to relieve him.

It is said just before, that Samson, by way of memorial, named the place where he slew the Philistines *Ramath Lehi* *, which means *the casting away of the jaw-bone*. Some learned men are therefore of opinion †, that instead of translating the passage, GOD *clave an hollow place that was in the jaw*, it ought to be, *an hollow place that was in LEHI* ; and this construction seems to be confirmed, by the words which follow after Samson's recovery is mentioned ; that he called the name thereof *En-hakkore, or the well of him that cried, which is in Lehi unto this day* (the time when the history was written) : now the *jaw-bone* would scarcely have remained so long ; besides, the testimony of many travellers, that a fountain remains in the very spot which is supposed to be *Lehi*, that bears the name of the fountain of the jaw, strongly tends to confirm this opinion.

The fate of Samson's wife and her father may be considered as a remarkable instance of GOD's judgments on treachery and deceitfulness, and should be a warning to all persons not to be guilty of any unlawful practices, lest they bring down mischief upon their own heads.

* Clarke's Annotations.

† Stackhouse on the Bible, and Essay for a new Translation.

SECTION LXI.

SAMSON CARRIES AWAY THE GATES OF GAZA—DELILAH BETRAYS HIM.

From Judges, Chap. xvi.

Then went Samson to Gaza: and it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning when it is day we shall kill him.

And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron.

And it came to pass afterwards, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver.

And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee?

And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withs that never were dried, then shall I be weak and be as another man.

Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withs which had not been dried, and she bound him with them.

Now there were men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber. And she said unto him, The Philis-

tines be upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withs, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known.

And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me and told me lies : now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound.

And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes that never-were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.

Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And there were liers in wait abiding in the chamber. And he brake them from off his arms like a thread.

And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me and told me lies : tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web.

And she fastened it with a pin, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam and with the web.

And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth.

And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death, that he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head ; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my birth : if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.

And

And when Delilah saw that he told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once; for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand.

And she made him sleep upon her knees: and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.

And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him.

But the Philistines took him and put out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Perhaps it was in defiance of the Philistines, that Samson went to a city belonging to them. How he was apprized of their scheme to surprise him suddenly is not mentioned: but it is likely, that *feeling the Spirit of the LORD was upon him*, he understood from this circumstance that the Philistines were about to attack him; and arose in the night, and, to their great confusion and amazement, took the city gates, which probably were well fastened to prevent his escape, and carried them, with all their ponderous appurtenances, to the top of a hill which was at several miles distance.

Delilah was certainly a mercenary wretch, who lived with him from interested views, such an one could not resist a bribe. How strange it appears, that Samson should not be better guarded against her artifices, than (with a weakness of mind which will ever disgrace his name)

name) to suffer the important secret to be drawn from him. We must not suppose, that the natural quality of Samson's hair differed from that of other men; but his remaining a *Nazarite*, under *covenant* with God, of which his hair was a *token*, made it impossible for the Philistines to subdue him; because the LORD had promised, that whilst he *abstained from wine, and let no razor come on his head*, he should be assisted by the power of the LORD in order to conquer them. This Divine assistance was not given to Samson as a reward for his own merit, but for the punishment of the Philistines, and the deliverance of Israel; though his being chosen by the LORD, for this purpose, gave him opportunities of shewing his *faith* as Joshua had done; of which if Samson had availed himself, he would have escaped the dreadful misfortunes wherein he was involved.

We find from his discourse with Delilah, that Samson *understood* that his extraordinary strength was not inherent in him, but would be taken away, if he broke the *Covenant* with God: no excuse therefore can be made for him; nor can we wonder that he was left to the unhappy consequences of his folly and wickedness, as he rather chose to please an abandoned woman, than to be the distinguished servant of the LORD.

What mortifying reflections must have arisen in the mind of Samson, when he felt that his strength was gone from him! And what agonies must have torn his wretched bosom, when he suffered the cruelties inflicted by the enraged Philistines! He now found himself a miserable captive, in the hands of enemies, who had suffered so much from him, that he could expect no mercy. He was deprived of his eyes, bound with fetters of brass, condemned to the most servile of all employments, and subject to continual insult and derision.

It was an inexcusable fault in Samson repeatedly to
form

form connexions with the Philistine women. The unhappy consequences of his attachment to Delilah should teach men to be on their guard against the artifices which are usually practised by wantons ; these unprincipled females, having no affection for those who are weak enough to waste their tenderness upon them, are ready to betray or ruin them whenever it will answer any mercenary views of their own.

SECTION LXII.

SAMSON'S DEATH.

From Judges, Chap. xvi.

HOWBEIT, the hair of Samson's head began to grow again after he was shaven.

Then the lords of the Philistines gathered themselves together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand.

And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.

And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry. that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison-house, and he made them sport. And they set him between the pillars.

And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.

Now the house was full of men and women: and all

the lords of the Philistines were there: and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.

And Samson called on the LORD, and said, O LORD, GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O GOD, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.

And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines: and bowed himself with all his might: and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death, were more than they which he slew in his life.

Then his brethren, and all the house of his father, came down and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol, in the burying place of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years,

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The heavy calamities which fell upon Samson awakened his conscience, and he acknowledged that the punishment was justly inflicted, for slighting the gift of GOD. We may conceive that in his doleful prison, he uttered the bitterest sighs and groans, repented with the utmost contrition, implored the pardon of GOD, and the *renewal* of the *covenant*, and resolved never more to part with one *sacred hair*, but to devote himself entirely to GOD; though he despaired of future opportunities of performing the part allotted him, and could

could only regret, with unavailing anguish, the loss of those which were past.

The Philistines might well rejoice in their advantage ; for who would have supposed that, in this abject condition, Sampson would ever have been able to do them any mischief? They were therefore not contented with exulting over *him*, but extended their impious derision to the God of Israel, despising His ALMIGHTY power, and extolling a vain idol called Dagon, a god of their own making, to whom they paid that adoration which was due to the Supreme Being ; to him they ascribed their success, and assembled to perform their profane rites ; and that their triumph might be complete, they sent for their poor afflicted captive, to divert themselves with his misery. The Philistines knew not that God had *accepted* Samson's *repentance*, and, as a proof of it, had *restored* the *appointed token*, causing his hair to grow suddenly, and that he now came with a fixed resolution to obey the Divine impulse, even at the hazard of his life : they therefore led him into their temple, intending, it is likely, to end their barbarities, by slaying and offering him as a victim to their abominable idol.

We may naturally suppose, that Samson as a *man* could not help feeling great resentment for the injuries he had suffered ; and as mankind were not under the mild Dispensation of Christianity, which alone teaches universal charity and forgiveness of enemies, we must not hastily condemn him for being desirous of revenge for the loss of his eyes. There is great reason to think that Samson moreover wished to maintain the honour of God, and that he felt the utmost degree of uneasiness in an assembly of idolators, when he prayed to the LORD to strengthen him once more, and that, believing his prayer was answered, he requested to be led to

the pillars which supported the roof, being willing to die with the Philistines, rather than they should insult his God with impunity ; hoping that the LORD would accept his life as an atonement for his former disobedience, since he was excluded from a possibility of offering those sacrifices which the law of Moses required for the expiation of sin. Samson therefore firmly grasped the pillars, and bowing his head, as a token of adoration of the LIVING GOD, and humble resignation to the Divine will, which had ordained him to punish the Philistines, he exerted the last effort of his strength in the duty required of him, and slew more at his death than he had ever done at *one time* in his most prosperous days.

Had Samson made a proper use of the extraordinary strength with which God was pleased to endue him, what a shining character would he have been ! but he certainly acted in a very inconsistent manner, for he ought to have made it the principal business of his life to effect the deliverance of Israel ; but he seems to have given himself very little concern about it ; he therefore gained no great *honour* by his victories, because he had generally a view to the gratification of anger and revenge on his own private account. The Philistines neither sought, nor desired, the protection of Divine providence, therefore they could not complain of injustice in God for giving success to Samson ; neither could Samson suppose that the LORD strengthened him in that wonderful manner, merely to enable him to avenge himself of his enemies ; when he reflected on the numbers he had slain, he must surely perceive that he had been employed as the champion of Israel, though no thanks were due to him for the services which he rendered, but to the LORD only.

Though

Though Sampson was in many respects beyond our imitation, and therefore it would be ridiculous for any man to attempt to slay a thousand with the jaw-bone of an ass, and carry huge gates loaded with iron upon his shoulders, yet the relation of his performing such wonders is not at all incredible ; because it is accounted for by our being told that *the Spirit of the LORD came upon him*. From the New Testament we learn, that Christians are under the influence of the *same Spirit* ; they must not indeed expect to be enabled to perform miracles, because the present state of the world does not require them. Let us however be warned by Samson's example, not to despise the gifts which are bestowed on us, but, whether we have *strength, wisdom, riches, or power*, let us consider them as the gifts of GOD, and employ them as far as we can to his honour and glory.

SECTION LXIII.

THE BIRTH OF SAMUEL.

From 1 Samuel Chap. i. and ii.

THERE was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, and his name was Elkanah, and he had two wives : the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah ; and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

And this man went up out of his city yearly, to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh, And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas, the priests of the LORD, were there.

And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions.

But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion, for he loved Hannah.

But Peninnah provoked her sore to make her fret, because the LORD had not given her children.

And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD; so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat.

Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons? so Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD.

And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.

And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, If thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.

And it came to pass as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth.

Now Hannah, she spake in her heart, only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she had been drunken.

And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.

And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drank neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD.

Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto.

Then

Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.

And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

And they rose in the morning early and worshipped before the Lord, and returned to their own house to Ramah: and the Lord remembered Hannah.

Wherefore it came to pass that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord.

And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the Lord the yearly sacrifice, and his vow.

But Hannah went not up: for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide for ever.

And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him, only the Lord establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck.

And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh. And the child was young.

And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli.

And she said, O my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord.

For this child I prayed: and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him.

Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord as long

as he liveth ; he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there.

And Hannah prayed and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD, my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies ; because I rejoice in thy salvation.

There is none holy as the LORD : for there is none beside thee : neither is there any rock like our GOD.

Talk no more so exceedingly proudly ; let not arrogance come out of your mouth : for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.

The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.

They that were full have hired out themselves for bread ; and they that were hungry ceased ; so that the barren hath borne seven, and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.

The LORD killeth and maketh alive ; he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.

The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich : he bringeth low, and lifteth up.

He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory : for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them.

He will keep the feet of the saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness : for by strength shall no man prevail.

The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces : out of heaven shall he thunder upon them : the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth ; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

And

And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house : and the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Elkanah the father of Samuel was by birth a Levite, descended from Kohath the second son of Levi : it seems he did not attend the service of the tabernacle, but lived privately in the country ; however, he was a person of remarkable piety, for he not only obeyed the Divine command of going to present himself three times in a year before the LORD, but he took his family with him to Shiloh.

Elkanah had married two wives, and the dissension between these women was the occasion of great uneasiness to him.

Hannah was of a meek and pious temper, but the circumstance of her having no children made her extremely unhappy, as she feared it was a mark of God's displeasure ; and the continual triumphs of her rival greatly aggravated her distress, so that she fell into a state of despondency. Her husband's kind remonstrances, however, brought her to a sense of her duty, and she resolved to apply to God for comfort and relief.

Hannah we find punctually performed her vow, and offered up the most thankful acknowledgments : in this instance, her behaviour is deserving of our imitation ; for we ought, when prosperity returns, to remember those pious resolutions which we formed whilst we were in distress.

There is great resemblance between Hannah's thanksgiving, and that of the blessed virgin, when the Angel announced to her, that she should be the mother of the MESSIAH*.

* See Luke i. 46.

HORN in Scripture sometimes signifies *glory, honour, brightness, and rays*. Hannah's meaning therefore, in saying, *mine horn is exalted in the LORD*, seems to be, that GOD had advanced her to honour.

The name of *rock* is frequently given to GOD in Scripture, (particularly to king David*) as an emblem of strength and protection. In those days, it was usual to flee to rocks, as asylums against the invasion of enemies.

It is said that *Samuel did minister unto the LORD* : he was then but three years old ; his mother must have taken uncommon pains, to be able to sow the seeds of piety so early ; and we find, by his subsequent conduct, that they were never rooted out.

Hannah's behaviour affords an excellent example to all persons who are under affliction ; and shews, that there is no remedy for grief like fervent humble prayer ; for we read, that *when she had poured forth her soul to the LORD, her countenance was no longer sad*. The success of her petition furnishes us with a convincing proof that GOD lends a gracious ear even to prayers which are offered for *particular blessings*, if it is consistent with His wisdom and goodness to grant them.

Hannah's thanksgiving discovers that she felt the most fervent piety ; indeed she seems to have been inspired by the HOLY SPIRIT when she uttered it, as king David was when he composed his psalms, therefore it encourages all persons in distress to place confidence in the LORD. It must however be observed, that those who do so are not to expect an exact accomplishment of their wishes, for GOD only knows how far this may be proper to grant ; but they may be sure that their faith and trust will be rewarded, as seemeth best to infinite wisdom.

* See Psalm lxii. 6. lxxxix. 26.

What an excellent example did Hannah set as a parent ; May all mothers like her seize the earliest opportunity of impressing the yet unprejudiced mind with religious knowledge, which can alone secure the present and future happiness of their children !

SECTION LXIV.

SAMUEL'S MINISTRY—A PROPHECY AGAINST ELI'S HOUSE.

From 1 Samuel, Chap. ii.

Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial ; they knew not the LORD.

And the priest's custom with the people was, that when any man offered sacrifice the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh-hook of three teeth in his hand : and he struck it into the pan or kettle, or caldron, or pot : all that the flesh-hook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.

Also before they burned the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest : for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw.

And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth : then he would answer him Nay ; but thou shalt give it me now : and if not, I will take it by force.

Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD : for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.

Moreover

Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and they went unto their own house, and the LORD blessed Hannah so that she had three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD.

Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto Israel; and he said unto them, Why do ye such things, for I hear of your dealings by all this people.

Nay, my sons: for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the LORD's people to transgress.

If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall intreat for him? notwithstanding, they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, wherefore the LORD would slay them.

And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.

And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said, unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? and did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?

Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at my offering, which I have commanded in my habitation, and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the choicest of all the offerings of Israel my people? Wherefore the LORD GOD of Israel saith, I said indeed, that thy house and the house of thy father should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith

saith, Be it far from me : for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

Behold, the days come that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house.

And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which GOD shall give Israel : and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever.

And the man of thine whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart : and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age.

And this shall be a sign unto thee that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phineas ; in one day they shall die both of them.

And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind : and I will build him a sure house ; and he shall walk before mine Anointed for ever.

And it shall come to-pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is said that *Eli's sons were sons of Belial*, that they *knew not the LORD* ; this expression means, that they lived as if they were ignorant of GOD, and served him like an *idol*, not for his honour, but their own profit. Discontented with their allotted portion of the sacrifices made by fire, they seized some part of the peace-offerings which belonged to the offerers, at the very instant

instant when they are going to feast religiously with their friends ; in short, they were guilty of many enormities of the most atrocious kind.—What a beautiful contrast did the piety of Samuel afford !

Eli, as high priest and supreme judge, had power to punish offenders ; and in such a case, paternal love should have given way to zeal for God's glory ; and though these wicked men were his own sons, he should have deprived them of the power of bringing the holy religion he professed into disrepute, by removing them from their office ; instead of this he gave them only a few mild reproofs, which they totally disregarded.

As Eli was in other respects a good man, the LORD sent a prophet to him, to awaken him to his duty, that he might by repentance obtain pardon for himself ; and the man of God reminded him in the name of the LORD, of the honourable distinction his family had long enjoyed, which would have been continued in that branch of Aaron's posterity, if they had not forfeited it ; but, the sons of Eli had cast off God, therefore he rejected them.

Eli was of the family of Ithamaz, Aaron's youngest son : how the priesthood came to be removed from the house of Eleazar the elder son, we are not told ; but it is likely that the last priest of this branch had been remiss in his duty, for which reason God deprived his descendants of the honour which he had promised to Phineas (the son of Eleazar)* for his zeal against the Midianites ; but though the LORD *suspended* the blessing for a time, he was mindful of his *covenant* ; he restored the priesthood, and established it afterwards in Eleazar's line.

There is in this section one text that demands particular attention, because it is a declaration from God

Numb. xxv. 12, 13.

Himself,

Himself, that concerns all mankind. *Those who honour me, I will honour ; and those who dishonour me shall be lightly regarded.* It is thus explained by a learned and pious Divine.

* ‘ To honour GOD is to have an esteem and reverence for him, and to shew it to the world in such a manner, as may promote virtue and religion. To entertain just and worthy notions of him, of his power, wisdom, justice, goodness, mercy ; to love him, to trust him, to desire to resemble him as nearly as our nature permits, and in all things to consult his will. To declare openly before men, that we do thus esteem him. To be constant and regular in the performance of all public acts of religion. To set a good example to others.

‘ We may likewise honour GOD by improving our abilities, and discharging the duties of our station in such a manner, as to procure respect to the religion we profess, and the country to which we belong.

‘ He who has wealth honours GOD with his substance when he relieves the poor, encourages honest industry and useful knowledge. He who has learning, wit, and judgment, honours GOD when he so applies them, as to excite in other men’s minds an ambition of excelling in goodness. He who has power, honours GOD when he discourages profaneness and immorality, and, by his own illustrious example, endeavours to invite others to well-doing. He who has reputation, honours GOD when he employs it to bring virtue into credit, and make vice unfashionable and contemptible. He who is in the lowest station honours GOD, when in his little sphere he shines an example, to the poorer sort, of honesty, diligence, and sobriety ; of contentment and reliance on GOD.’

Children may likewise honour God, by giving a willing attention to learn their duty, and a hearty desire of rendering themselves acceptable to him.

‘ If we thus *honour* GOD, *he will honour us* ; that is
 ‘ to say, we shall be honoured in this world with the
 ‘ esteem of good and wise men, and the particular love
 ‘ and favour of GOD, and in a future state we shall re-
 ‘ ceive a crown of glory.

‘ But if we dishonour GOD by a contempt of his
 ‘ authority, an abuse of his gifts, and a disobedience
 ‘ to his will, we shall, like Eli’s sons, *be lightly esteemed* :
 ‘ all whose favour is worth gaining will avoid our com-
 ‘ pany, and we shall lose the blessing of God, and all
 ‘ the glorious rewards that are promised to those who do
 ‘ well, and shall be for ever miserable.’

We find that Hannah’s piety was remembered ; for it pleased GOD to honour her with a family, in return for the honour she rendered him.

SECTION LXV.

THE WORD OF THE LORD REVEALED TO SAMUEL.

From 1 Samuel, Chap. iii.

AND the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the WORD of the LORD was precious in those days ; there was no open vision.

And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see ;

And ere the lamp of GOD went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of GOD was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep ; that the LORD called Samuel. And he answered, Here am I.

And

And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I ; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not ; lie down again. And he went and lay down.

And the Lord called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose, and went to Eli and said, Here am I : for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son ; lie down again.

Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the WORD of the LORD yet revealed unto him.

And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I ; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child.

Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down : and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD, for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak, for thy servant heareth.

And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.

In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house : when I begin I will also make an end.

For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth : because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.

And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision.

Then

Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I.

And he said, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee.

And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.

And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

And all Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD.

And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the WORD of the LORD.

And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Whilst the family of Eli were dishonouring God, Samuel, though a little child, was devoutly attending on his service, and daily improving in those religious graces which are rewarded with the favour of the LORD, and those amiable virtues that procure the esteem of mankind.

It is to be observed that the Divine revelation was given to Samuel by an *open vision* of the WORD of the Lord. In the New Testament we read, that the WORD was the same DIVINE BEING by whom the world was created *, the LORD GOD.

From the days of Moses, till the time of Samuel, the

* See John i. 1, &c.

WORD *of the* LORD was seldom revealed. Now and then a person was inspired to deliver messages from God on extraordinary occasions, as in the case of Eli; but there were no settled prophets, to whom the people might have recourse to know the will of the LORD; for it is likely that the LORD withheld the spirit of prophecy as a token of His displeasure, on account of the corruption of His holy worship.

Samuel was laid down to sleep in some apartment adjoining to Eli's, when the WORD of the LORD came unto him: supposing that it was Eli's voice, he hasted, with dutiful respect, to wait on him, though in the dead of the night. Samuel, who no doubt, from his early piety, had high and sublime notions of the divine majesty, had no idea that the LORD would condescend to speak as with a human voice.

How humiliating must it have been to Eli, when he found that a little child was preferred before him! For he had reason to regard this circumstance as a farther token of God's displeasure against his house: this would naturally make him inquisitive into the matter that was going to be revealed; and his being convinced beforehand that the LORD was about to speak, would prevent his suspecting that Samuel had invented, or imagined the thing. Eli however, as his duty required, gave the best instructions he could to Samuel who returned to his bed, and at this time seems to have had some *visible token* of the DIVINE PRESENCE, for it is said, that *the LORD stood and called as at other times*, which satisfied Samuel that it was not Eli who called him; he answered as Eli had taught him; and then, with silence and composure, received the awful message.

We may imagine that Eli experienced the most painful perturbations of mind, till he knew what the
LORD

LORD had revealed ; and Samuel's backwardness to declare the heavy tidings, shews, that he had a tender affection for Eli, and was afraid to grieve him. The patient resignation of the poor old man, shewed, that his heart acknowledged *the power of God*, and the *justice of the sentence* pronounced against his wicked sons.

We may learn from the punishment of Eli, that those who do not restrain others from sin, when in their power, make themselves partakers in their guilt ; especially parents, whose particular duty it is, not only to admonish, but to chastise their children, if they do ill.

Young persons, who are well disposed, will listen to such mild reproofs from their parents as they must be sensible proceed from an affectionate solicitude for their welfare ; but if they are so obstinate and disobedient as to render these ineffectual, paternal love requires, that punishment should be inflicted ; for who would willingly consign their beloved offspring to the curse of God, and risk the loss of their temporal and eternal happiness ? If Eli had properly discharged his duty in this respect, he would have escaped that disgrace and disappointment which, as we shall find, brought down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, and his sons might have lived to be the comfort and crown of his old age.

SECTION LXVI.

THE ISRAELITES OVERCOME BY THE PHILISTINES—
THE ARK IS TAKEN, AND ELI'S SONS SLAIN—
ELI'S DEATH.

From 1 Samuel, Chap. iv.

Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Eben-ezer : and the Philistines pitched in Aphek.

And

And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel : and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines : and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men.

And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines ? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.

So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims ; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again.

And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews ? and they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp.

And the Philistines were afraid ; for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Wo unto us ! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore.

Wo unto us ! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods ? these are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.

Be strong and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you : quit yourselves like men, and fight.

And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent ; and there was a

very great slaughter ; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen.

And the ark of God was taken ; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.

And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head.

And when he came, lo Eli sat upon a seat by the way side, watching ; for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city and told it, all the city cried out.

And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What meaneth the noise of this tumult ? and the man came in hastily, and told Eli.

Now Eli was ninety and nine years old ; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see.

And the man said unto Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son ? And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken.

And it came to pass when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake and he died ; for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years. And his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, bare a son at that time, and she died also ; and she said, The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The people of Israel, finding that they had actually a prophet amongst them, began to think it was a proper time to attempt to free themselves from the Philistines ; but they set about this important business in a very irregular and unlawful manner, neglecting to ask counsel of God, and reform their lives ; they were therefore suffered to fall a prey to their enemies. One would have supposed, that ill success would have reminded them of their duty ; but instead of repenting, they seem to have relied on the goodness of their cause, and to think that they could *oblige* God to appear for them in vindication of His honour, by having the ark in the camp.

Eli was very blameable in suffering the ark to be removed ; and his sons, who had doubtless been informed of the judgments denounced against them, were impious to the last degree in presuming to carry it ; especially, as there was in the law of Moses an express command, that, when the people were settled in Canaan, the ark should *rest*, that all might come to it.

It was customary for the heathens to carry images of their false deities to battle, to which they imputed all their successes ; no wonder, therefore, that they should be alarmed at hearing that the ark, before which the walls of Jericho had fallen to the ground, was in the camp of Israel : but could the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for whom so many miracles had been wrought, be so ignorant as to suppose that it was in their power to *command* the DIVINE PRESENCE to attend their motions ? or that the *living* God, the KING of KINGS, and LORD of LORDS, would submit to be ranked with idols ?

There is no difficulty in accounting for the defeat which God permitted the Philistines to give to the Israelites; it certainly was intended to teach them how wrong it was to trust to external privileges, and fancy that the ark would save them, when God was departed.

Eli appears in this instance to have acted contrary to the dictates of his own mind, and to have suffered his sons to usurp that authority which belonged to him: for we find he was in great agitation of mind, *his heart trembled for the ark*, lest it should fall into the hands of the Philistines; as Israel, especially his own sons, had forfeited it. Now the dreadful threatening comes to his mind that he should see, as a prophet told him, *an enemy in God's habitation!* When the messenger arrived, wearing sackcloth and ashes, the ensigns of distress, he eagerly demanded *what was done?* With courage and fortitude he heard of the slaughter of the people, and the death of Hophni and Phinehas; but the loss of the ARK entirely overcame him, for he knew there was no comfort left for Israel, now the GLORY of the LORD was departed.

It was become necessary, for the sake of religion, that those who violated its holy institutions, and suffered others to do so, should be pointed out to the world by exemplary punishments. Eli was certainly a devout man, but as judge and high-priest he was faulty, it is to be hoped that his penitence procured the pardon of God, and that his punishment was only *temporal*.

In respect to this mode of government, Eli seems to have differed from all former judges; they were distinguished for personal courage, and, by the extraordinary aid of the LORD, they subdued the enemies of Israel, but assumed no authority over them in time of peace; for under them (Joshua excepted) *every man did that which was right in his own eyes*; but it appears, that

that on account of his being high-priest, the people chose Eli as the properest judge to decide controversies amongst them.

In the Christian dispensation there is no ark of the covenant, but we are well assured, that the LORD as certainly dwells with us, as He did with the Israelites (though invisible). We may however provoke him to withdraw His presence if we attempt to dishonour Him; let us therefore remember, that it is the glory of a nation to have the LORD amongst them; and let us strive, by the means He has pointed out in the Scriptures, to invite GOD to abide with us.

SECTION LXVII.

**THE PHILISTINES BRING THE ARK OF GOD INTO
THE HOUSE OF DAGON.**

From 1 Sam. Chap. v.

AND the Philistines took the ark of GOD, and brought it from Eben-ezer unto Ashdod.

When the Philistines took the ark of GOD, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.

And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon and set him in his place again.

And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD: and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold: only the stump of Dagon was left to him.

Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day.

But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them and smote them, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof.

And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, the ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us; for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god.

They sent therefore, and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? and they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about thither.

And it was so, that after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was against them; and he smote the men of the city both small and great.

Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people.

So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.

And the men that died not were smitten; and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

And the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months.

And

And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the LORD? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place.

And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass offering; then ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you.

And ye shall give glory to the God of Israel; peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, from off your gods, and from off your land.

Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed? Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch-kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them; And take the ark of the LORD, and lay it upon the cart: and put the jewels of gold which ye return him for a trespass-offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go.

And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Beth-shemesh, then he hath done us this great evil; but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us.

And the men did so: and took two milch-kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home: And they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart, and the coffer with the jewels of gold.

And the kine took the straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh, and went along the high-way, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left: and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Beth-shemesh.

And they of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat-harvest in the valley : and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it.

And the cart came into the field of Joshua a Beth-shemite, and stood there, where there was a great stone : and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt-offering unto the LORD.

And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD, and the coffer that was with it, wherein the jewels of gold were, and put them on the great stone : and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the LORD.

And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen it, they returned to Ekron the same day.

And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men. And the people lamented because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter.

And the men of Beth-shemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD GOD ? and to whom shall he go up from us ?

And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim, saying the Philistines have brought again the ark of the LORD : come ye down, and fetch it up to you.

And the men of Kirjath-jearim came and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD.

And it came to pass while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long ; for it was twenty years : and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It appears from Scripture *, that the *true* God was known and worshipped by the Philistines in the days of Abraham, for Abimelech their king was a religious and just person; but they afterwards degenerated into idolatry, and each of their five cities seems to have had a separate idol. Dagon appears to have been the most ancient and favourite god they had; to him they ascribed the invention of agriculture. Some authors suppose, that the upper part of Dagon's image was in the form of a man, the lower like a fish; but others think it entirely resembled the human figure.

“ As the Philistines † were delivered from their fears of the ark, it is likely they imagined that the God of Israel was inferior to Dagon, therefore they carried the ark into the temple dedicated to that idol, as a trophy of victory; but their triumph was of short duration, for God having punished Israel, who betrayed the ark, proceeded to chastise those who abused it.

“ How must the worshippers of Dagon be astonished, when they beheld their mighty idol fallen before the ark? directing, as it might seem, his followers, to adore the God of Israel; but they perhaps imagined, that the fall of Dagon was accidental, they therefore put him in his place again: without doubt, they fastened him in the strongest manner, but soon found that it was in vain to contend with God, for the next day Dagon appeared more contemptible than ever, with his hands and face broken to pieces; which ought to have taught his followers, that he was destitute of wisdom and power:”

* See vol. i. Section 15.

† Henry's Annotations.

but, instead of being reformed, they were hardened in their idolatry, therefore the LORD afflicted them with dreadful diseases and sudden death.

The priests of the Philistines seem to have been acquainted with some of the *ceremonials* of the Jewish religion, for they knew that the Israelites were required to offer trespass offerings, and to *give glory to God*. Instead of receiving a ransom for the ark, the Philistines were glad to give rich gifts to deliver themselves from it, which remained as lasting memorials of their disgrace.

The cows leaving their calves, and taking the road to the land of Israel, is a wonderful instance of the power of God over the brute creation.

As the cart and cows were sanctified to the LORD, it would have been improper to use them otherwise than as a sacrifice.

Those who presumed to look into the ark, shewed that they had but little reverence for God and His holy ordinances. It is said *, “that the LORD *smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men*; but several learned authors are of opinion, that the passage is translated wrong, and that it should be, the LORD *smote AMONG the people who amounted to fifty thousand threescore and ten men.*” We do not find that they humbled themselves to God for their sin, but that they only expressed their fear of his power, and fell from presumption to despair.

Kirjath jearim was in the road to Shiloh, so we may suppose that the men of Beth-shemesh thought that the elders of Shiloh would fetch the ark from thence: but, through the neglect of religion, and the disturbances of the times, it seems they did not, for we do not find

* Essay for a new Translation.

that it was ever restored to its ancient seat. The men of Kirjath-jearim joyfully received the ark; by which it seems, that they perfectly understood the offence of the Bethshemites. Abinadab, in whose house the ark was deposited, was a man of distinction amongst them, and eminent for his piety, and they sanctified his son to keep it, who entirely devoted himself to the care of the ark, and applied to no other business. Eleazar was not a regular priest, nor was it necessary he should be so, because here was no altar, either for sacrifice or incense.

We need not dwell upon these circumstances, because they relate principally to those parts of the law of Moses which concerned the Jews only; the *general instruction* they give is this, that in all religious acts we must pay constant regard to the honour of God, and not wish to search into those mysteries which He, for wise reasons, has concealed from us.

It surely must have been a great mortification and disgrace to the Israelites to have their tabernacle deprived of its greatest ornament and treasure, the *ARK of the TESTIMONY*, from which the *DIVINE PRESENCE* was manifested between the cherubims, but this people were so degenerated, and had so little regard for religion, that they were contented with lamenting the *absence* of their God, without endeavouring to invite his *PRESENCE*, though, according to their covenant, they had no claim to His Divine assistance, unless they observed His holy institutions.

May we never imitate them in this respect, but endeavour, by a regular attendance on the worship of God, and the discharge of our duty, to secure His favour to us; of which we may then be as fully assured, as if we should behold His *GLORY* from the *merty seat*; for the ark was only an emblem of God's *heavenly*

throne, intended to intimate, that though the Divine Being is surrounded with angels, and dwelleth in brightness, which no one can approach, He will graciously receive the sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving, and bless those who offer them with sincerity and humility of heart.

SECTION LXVIII.

**SAMUEL EXHORTETH THE ISRAELITES--THEY REPENT
AND TURN UNTO THE LORD.**

From 1 Sam. Chapt. vii.

AND Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only.

And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.

And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.

And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not

to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.

And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering whole unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him.

And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them and they were smitten before Israel.

And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them until they came under Beth-car.

Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, or the stone of Help*, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.

So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath, and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth-el, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.

And his return was to Ramah: for there was his house: and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the LORD.

* Marginal translation.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is likely, that immediately after the death of Eli, Samuel succeeded to his authority as judge; and being a PROPHET, he might offer sacrifices; but it does not appear that there was any HIGH PRIEST, for the whole form of worship was overturned by the loss of the ark; and we may suppose the people were ill disposed to hearken unto Samuel's admonitions; besides, it is probable, that he did not take upon himself to proceed in any important matter without the direction of the LORD, who withheld Divine inspiration on account of the people's unworthiness, leaving them to suffer a while the ill consequences of their folly and wickedness; but as soon as they returned and sought the LORD, Samuel knew he might intercede for them, though he was only a Levite, for the priests had debased themselves, and his sacrifices proved acceptable. About this time it is likely, the great passover was kept, which is afterwards mentioned*. Divine Providence visibly interposed in the defeat of the Philistines, and the LORD once more shewed himself to be God of *Israel*.

Samuel built an altar, not in contempt of that which was with the tabernacle, but as Shiloh was laid waste, and no other place had yet been chosen, he looked upon the law which obliged them to one place to be suspended; therefore being a prophet, and under Divine inspiration, he did as the patriarchs had formerly done, built an altar where he lived, both for the use of his own family, and for the good of the inhabitants who chose to resort to it.

As we shall have occasion, in the succeeding part of

* 2 Chron. xxxv. 18.

the history, to say so much about prophets, it is necessary to have proper ideas of the **PROPHETIC OFFICE**.

It was the business of the *priests* to explain the law to the people, and to take particular care that the *ceremonial* part of it should be punctually observed, that they might continue to be a *holy* people, and enjoy the privileges granted to them on those conditions. The *Levites* were assistants to the *priests* in the work of the tabernacle; but to prevent the people's dwelling too much on the *rituals* of religion, it pleased God to appoint another order of men called **PROPHETS**; these men preached the necessity of *righteousness*, and admonished the people to adhere to the *spiritual intent* of the *law of Moses*, as well as to observe its *ceremonies*; warned them of the *evils to come* if they were disobedient, and comforted them with the *promise of God's returning favour if they repented*. To qualify them for this office, the **LORD** *inspired them with His HOLY SPIRIT*: on these occasions they spoke *in the name of the LORD*, and uttered *unpremeditated predictions* in sublime and majestic language.

Sometimes they foretold * the fate of those nations with whom the Israelites were concerned (of which we shall have occasion to remark a variety of instances); but the principal ends of **PROPHECY** were, to keep up a *constant expectation* of the **MESSIAH** *till he should come into the world*, and to serve *afterwards* as a **TESTIMONY**, or *witness*, that **JESUS CHRIST** was really the *promised SAVIOUR*.

As Abraham continued faithful in the midst of an idolatrous generation, his posterity was selected as a *peculiar people*, amongst whom God shewed forth His power and goodness; and the gift of prophecy was

* See Bishop Hurd's Sermon on Prophecy.

limited to this nation, whilst the LORD vouchsafed to be their KING: by which means it was easy to discover, that the Divine Being had formed a most benevolent plan for the benefit of *all mankind*, which could not have been so well understood, if the predictions concerning the *Everlasting Covenant* (which threw light on each other) had been made in *different* nations; because the confusion of tongues had rendered many of those who originally proceeded from *Noah*, strangers to each other, and prevented the general intercourse which subsisted at first.

It is generally believed that Samuel instituted schools or colleges, consisting of young persons of pious dispositions, who passed their time in the study of the Scriptures, in order that they might be enabled to explain them to the people, and perhaps with the hopes of being honoured with *revelations* themselves: one of their religious exercises, was, singing the words of inspiration contained in the Scriptures; such as the prophecies of the patriarchs, the exhortations of Moses, the song of the LORD, &c. to musical instruments.

These young persons, being immediately under the direction of a *prophet*, were called the *sons of the prophets*, and sometimes *prophets*; and whilst they were reciting *the words of inspiration* they were so, because they spake not their own words, but declared to the people what the LORD *had revealed*. The true meaning of the word *prophet**, is, *one who relates what the LORD hath spoken*.

The benefits conveyed to the world by means of prophecy were not confined to the Jewish nation; they are extended to Christians. In the written prophecies we possess some of the strongest evidences in favour of

* Dr. Sharpe on Prophecy.

our holy religion ; and we should be thankful to God for the light they afford us.

SECTION LXIX.

THE ISRAELITES DESIRE A KING—GOD COMMANDETH SAMUEL TO YIELD TO THEIR IMPORTUNITY.

From 1 Samuel, Chap. viii.

AND it came to pass when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.

Now the name of his first born was Joel, and the name of his second, Abiah : they were judges in Beersheba.

And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel, unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways ; now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us : And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee : for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods ; so do they also unto thee.

Now

Now therefore hearken unto their voice : howbeit, yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king.

And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you : he will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen, and some shall run before his chariots.

And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties, and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.

And he will take your fields and your vineyards, and your olive-yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

And he will take the tenth of your seeds, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers and to his servants.

And he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

He will take the tenth of your sheep : and ye shall be his servants.

And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you ; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.

Nevertheless, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel ; and they said, Nay, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations ; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD.

And

And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city,

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As Samuel was so good a man, there is no doubt but he had given his sons a religious education, and that he thought them fit for the employments he appointed them to ; but when they were at a distance from him, they did as young men are too apt to do, when they enter the world and act for themselves, they forgot the admonition of their pious parent, and suffered their minds to be allured from the straight path of duty by the desire of riches and pleasure : it does not appear, however, that Samuel's sons dishonoured God's holy worship as Eli's had done.

The people of Israel had not, at this time, a proper idea of God's peculiar sovereignty over them, that he was to them *instead* of a king ; and being inclined to war, and having no general, they set themselves to contriving what kind of leader would be best for them, instead of seeking to the LORD for direction.

The elders knew that Samuel was the prophet of the LORD, and that his administration of justice had ever been mild and equitable. The misconduct of his sons Samuel was till then ignorant of, or he would most likely have corrected it ; and if he was old, he had grown old in their service ; therefore they were guilty of great ingratitude to him. The venerable man shewed, however, very little concern for the indignities they offered to himself, but he was distressed at finding they wished to make a change in their affairs, which would be so much to their disadvantage. They did not say,
give

give us a king that is good and wise, that will judge us better than thy sons do, but *a king like all the nations.*

The Israelites, seem, however, to have retained some degree of reverence towards God ; for we find that they returned peaceably to their houses, and left the choice of the person to Samuel, who they knew would act as the LORD should direct him ; and there is no doubt but that the prophet determined to proceed in this important affair according to the instructions of Moses, before alluded to, which were as follow ;

‘ When thou art come unto the land which the LORD
 ‘ thy GOD giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt
 ‘ dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me,
 ‘ like as all the nations that are about me ; thou shalt
 ‘ in anywise set him king over the whom the LORD
 ‘ thy GOD shall choose ; one from among thy brethren
 ‘ shalt thou set a king over thee ; thou mayest not set a
 ‘ stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. But
 ‘ he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause
 ‘ the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he
 ‘ should multiply horses ; forasmuch as the LORD
 ‘ hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no
 ‘ more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives
 ‘ to himself that his heart turn not away : neither
 ‘ shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.—
 ‘ And it shall be when he sitteth upon the throne of
 ‘ his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this
 ‘ law in a book, out of that which is before the priests
 ‘ the Levites : and it shall be with him, and he shall
 ‘ read therein all the days of his life ;] that he may
 ‘ learn to fear the LORD his GOD, to keep all the
 ‘ words of this law and these statutes, to do them :
 ‘ that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren,
 ‘ and that he turn not aside from the commandment
 ‘ to the right hand or to the left ; to the end that he
 ‘ may

‘ may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel*.’

The kings of the earth were despotic princes, and treated their subjects in the manner Samuel by the LORD’s command described, yet the Israelites persisted in desiring to have a king like those who ruled the other nations. How great was their folly and wickedness, when the SUPREME BEING himself condescended to be their King, and to make them perceive that He was in the midst of them, had appointed a Tabernacle, which might properly be called the Palace of the DIVINE PRESENCE ! The LORD also led the Israelites forth to battle, and subdued their enemies before them ; He settled them in a pleasant and fruitful land, and gave them such laws as would, if properly observed, have infallibly secured the peace of society. Could there possibly be a more happy government than that in which the fountain of all wisdom and power, justice, and goodness, presided ? Their demand of a king therefore, was both insolent and treasonable, as it was throwing off GOD, and subverting the government which He had established.

But as the LORD had designed that they should at his appointed time have a monarchical form of government, he commanded Samuel to comply with their request and give them a king.

* Deut. xvii. 14.

SECTION LXX.

SAMUEL ANOINTETH SAUL TO BE KING OVER

ISRAEL.

From 1 Samuel, Chap. ix, x.

Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power.

And he had a son whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly ; and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he ; from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.

And the asses of Kish, Saul's father, were lost : And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses.

And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha ; but they found them not : then they passed through the land of Shalim : and there they were not : and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found them not.

And when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that was with him, Come, and let us return ; lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us.

And the servant said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honourable man ; all that he saith cometh surely to pass ; now let us

us go thither ; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go.

Then said Saul to his servant, But behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man ; for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God : what have we ? And the servant answered Saul again and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver : that will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way.

(Before-time in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the Seer : for he that is now called a Prophet, was before time called a Seer.) Then said Saul to his servant, Well said ; come, let us go. So they went unto the city where the man of God was.

And as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the Seer here ? And they answered them, and said, He is, behold he is before you : make haste now ; for he came to-day to the city ; for there is a sacrifice of the people to-day in the high place.

As soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall straightway find him, before he go up to the high place to eat : for the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice, and afterwards they eat that be bidden. Now therefore get ye up, for about this time ye shall find him.

And they went up into the city ; and when they were come into the city, behold Samuel came out against them for to go up to the high place.

Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, To-morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel,

rael, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked unto my people, because their cry is come unto me.

And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of: this same shall reign over my people.

Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the Seer's house is.

And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the Seer: go up before me unto the high place, for ye shall eat with me to-day; and to-morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart.

And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them, for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house? and Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel: and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me? And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them in to the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which were about thirty persons.

And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee.

And the cook took up the shoulder, and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, Behold that which is left, set it before thee, and eat: for unto this time hath it been kept for thee, since I said I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day.

And when they were come down from the high place into the city, Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house.

And

And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel abroad.

And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the setvant pass on before us (and he passed on), but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God.

Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?

When thou art departed from me to-day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre, in the border of Benjamin, at Zelzah, and they will say unto thee, The asses, which thou wentest to seek, are found: and lo thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you, saying, What shall I do for my son?

Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Bethel, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine. And they will salute thee, and give thee two loaves of bread; which thou shalt receive of their hands.

After that thou shalt come to the hill of Gon, where is the garrison of the Philistines; and it shall come to pass when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place, with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp before them, and they shall prophesy.

And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.

And let it be when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion shall serve thee, for God is with thee.

And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal, and behold I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt-offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace-offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do.

And it was so, that when Saul had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day.

And when they came thither to the hill, behold a company of prophets met him: and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.

And it came to pass when all that knew him before-time saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? is Saul also among the prophets? And one of the same place answered, and said, But who is their father? therefore it became a proverb, Is Saul also among the prophets? And when he had made an end of prophesying, he came to the high place.

And Saul's uncle said unto him, and to his servant, Whither went ye? and he said, To seek the asses: and when we saw that they were no where, we came to Samuel.

And Saul's uncle said, Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you.

And Saul said unto his uncle, He told us plainly that
the

the asses were found. But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, he told him not.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Saul, as his subsequent conduct shewed, was in his natural disposition like the kings Samuel had described to the Israelites ; but he was distinguished by the height of his stature and the gracefulness of his person, which were sufficient recommendations to them, who wanted a king to go in and out before them, to fight their battles.

Saul's going himself to seek his father's asses, shews the simplicity of manners which prevailed in those times. His ignorance in respect to Samuel proves, that religion was then at a very low ebb, otherwise all Israel would have known the *prophet of the LORD*. The present which Saul meant to make him, was an offering of respect, to the chief magistrate ; to whom it was customary to pay this kind of homage. SEER is another word of the same signification as PROPHET—one *who sees in visions what the LORD reveals*. The LORD had made known secretly to Samuel Saul's coming ; so we are to understand the expression, that *the LORD told him in his ear*.

Samuel, as an assurance to Saul that what he foretold would certainly come to pass, took him to a retired place, and there anointed him, saluting him with a kiss as a mark of honour and allegiance ; the prophet then informed Saul of the nature and duty of the high office he was ordained to fill ; that he was to consider himself as Captain over those who were called the LORD's inheritance, or God's peculiar people ; and as ac-

countable to **GOD** for all his actions. In further confirmation to Saul, that he would certainly be placed on the throne of Israel, Samuel predicted some circumstances which would occur in his journey, which would by their completion prove, that Samuel was really inspired. He then told Saul, that " he should meet a company of prophets," &c.

Saul immediately on his departure from Samuel felt that **GOD** had made him another man : ' * A new fire was kindled in his breast ; his mind panted with ardent desire to perform great exploits, and from a husbandman he found himself changed to a general, a statesman, and a prince.' Full of these exalted thoughts, he arrived at a place called **GOD's Hill** (on account of its being the residence of the prophets) ; here he met a company of the sons or disciples of the prophets, with their sacred music ; and the **SPIRIT** of the **LORD** came suddenly upon him, so that he was able to join, without any previous instruction, in exalting the name of the **LORD** with holy rapture.

Saul's neighbours might well be astonished at finding him engaged in such an employment ; ' but one of them answered and said, who is their father ?' which is supposed to mean, *is not GOD their instructor ?* who could make Saul a prophet as well as the rest.

Before Saul returned home, he went to the high place, or place of public worship, to offer up his thanksgivings, and did not boast of the honour that had been conferred on him, being at that time filled with religious fervour.

There is something very wonderful in this transaction, which shews the over-ruling Providence of **GOD**,

* Henry's Annotations.

who

who can bring about great events by the most trifling means. Saul sought his father's asses, and found a kingdom. How frequently does it happen in common life that those who are disappointed in some of their wishes, are recompensed by unexpected blessings.

SECTION LXXI.

SAMUEL ASSEMBLETH THE PEOPLE—CASTETH LOTS FOR A KING, AND SAUL IS CHOSEN—THE ISRAELITES APPROVE HIM.

From 1 Samuel, Chap. x.

AND Samuel called the people together unto the LORD to Mizpeh; and said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you.

And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations: and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD, by your tribes, and by your thousands.

And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken.

When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought him he could not be found.

Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither: and the LORD answered, Behold he hath hid himself among the stuff.

And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he

stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people, from his shoulders and upward.

And Samuel said to the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king.

Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the LORD; and Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house.

And Saul also went home to Gibeah, and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched.

But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents: but he held his peace.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though Samuel knew the will of God, and had already anointed Saul, he gave the people the satisfaction of casting lots, that they might be convinced that Saul was really appointed by the LORD, who alone could determine the lot to fall agreeably to Samuel's election. It is probable, Saul apprehended that the people would reject him with scorn and contempt, as he was of the meanest of the tribes, which made him resolve to conceal himself, till the matter was determined. What Samuel wrote was a covenant between the king and the people, in which the king promised to govern them agreeably to the will of the LORD, and the people to pay him allegiance as their sovereign.

A learned author* thinks, that the Prophet made a *register* to testify to the people if they should afterwards

* Bishop Patrick.

be unhappy under the arbitrary government of their kings, that they had brought the evils upon themselves, and were justly punished for rejecting the LORD, *who had delivered them out of the hand of those that oppressed them, and saved them out of all their tribulations.*

It is very certain that all events are ordered by an overruling providence, yet the will of man is left free. In the case of Saul, God yielded to the people's desire: He suffered them to have a nominal king, and He allotted for them exactly such an one as they wished for, one that, if left to himself, would rule them after the manner of the other nations: but we shall find that the LORD did not cease to govern Israel as their *King*, though they had rejected him; he maintained his own honour by keeping the supreme command over them. Saul was no other than the LORD's vicerent, sitting on *the throne of the LORD*; and bound to rule by the Divine Law, and to obey the commands of the LORD in all things relating to the government of the nation, and to the making of peace or war with the heathen nations. His duty was to follow the directions for the conduct of a king of Israel, recorded by Moses; but his inclination was, as we read afterwards, to rule with arbitrary sway, without regard to the divine will.

SECTION LXXII.

THE AMMONITES ENCAMP AGAINST JABESH-GILEAD—

SAUL DELIVERS THEM OUT OF THEIR HANDS, AND IS CONFIRMED IN HIS KINGDOM.

From 1 Samuel, Chap. xi.

THEN Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabesh-gilead: and all the men of Ja-

Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee.

And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel.

And the elders of Jabesh said unto him, give us seven days respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then if there be no man to save us, we will come out to thee.

Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings in the ears of the people: and all the people lift up their voices, and wept.

And behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field, and Saul said, What aileth the people that they weep? And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh.

And the Spirit of God came upon Saul, when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly.

And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul, and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen: and the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent.

And when he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand.

And they said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, To-morrow, by that time the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and shewed it to the men of Jabesh, and they were glad.

Therefore the men of Jabesh said, To-morrow we will

will come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you.

And it was so on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies, and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites, until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together.

And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? Bring the men, that we may put them to death.

And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to-day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel.

Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there.

And all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal: and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace-offerings before the LORD: and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

To what an abject condition must the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead have been reduced! It is plain they had no confidence in the aid of the LORD, nor did they attempt to seek it, being conscious that as Israel had rejected God, they had no claim to His assistance; therefore, in order to save their lives, they determined to submit to slavery. The terms which Nahash proposed to them were of the most humiliating kind. "The reason he desired to have their right eyes put out, was, that they might be rendered incapable of fighting

either with their bows and arrows, or with swords and shields. In combat the left eye is usually covered with the shield ; and in shooting with the bow, it is customary to wink with it."

As some few amongst the Israelites were disaffected to Saul, he had chosen rather to return to his private station, after he was elected, than to be the cause of civil dissension ; but as soon as he beheld his people in distress, he resolved to act as became the *captain of the LORD's inheritance*, for he had not yet given way to pride and ambition, and he was instantly inspired with courage to oppose the Ammonites. Saul shewed great skill as well as bravery in the exertion of his authority ; he had now an opportunity of revenging himself on those who had opposed his being elected ; but with a true generosity and nobleness of spirit, he forgave their injurious treatment, and imputed his success to the power of the LORD : by this moderation, he gained the applauses of the people, who now *unanimously* consented to confirm him in the kingdom. Happy would it have been for Saul, if he had continued to act on such principles ! In respect to his forbearance towards his enemies, he was highly worthy of imitation.

SECTION LXXIII.

SAMUEL TESTIFIETH HIS INTEGRITY.

From 1 Samuel, Chap. xii.

AND Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you. And now, behold, the king walketh before you ; and I am old and grey-headed : and behold, my sons are with you : and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day.

Behold,

Behold, here I am, witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed : whose ox have I taken ? or whose ass have I taken ? or whom have I defrauded ? whom have I oppressed ? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith ? and I will restore it to you.

And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand.

And he said unto them, The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.

And Samuel said unto the people, It is the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt.

Now therefore stand still that I may reason with you before the LORD, of all the righteous acts of the LORD which he did to you and to your fathers.

When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place.

And when they forgat the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.

And they cried unto the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth : but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee.

And the Lord sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand

of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe. And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay ; but a king shall reign over us : when the LORD your God was your king.

Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired : and behold, the LORD hath set a king over you.

If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye, and also the king that reigneth over you, continue following the LORD your God.

But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers.

Now therefore stand and see this great thing which the LORD will do before your eyes.

Is it not wheat-harvest to-day ? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain : that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great which ye have done in the sight of the LORD in asking you a king.

So Samuel called unto the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day : and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not : for we have added unto all our sins this evil to ask us a king.

And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not : ye have done all this wickedness ; yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart ;

heart; and turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain.

For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.

Moreover, as for me, GOD forbid that I should sin against the LORD, in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you.

But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed both ye and your king.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

By the affecting discourse which Samuel made to the Israelites, when he was going to resign the government into Saul's hands, we may learn, that he was not insensible to the indignity they had put upon him, after so many years faithful services; he therefore required, for the sake of his reputation, that if they had any crime to alledge against him, they would accuse him to his face, that he might have an opportunity of vindicating himself: they could do no less than bear an honourable testimony to the whole of his conduct, which had been regulated by the strictest rules of integrity and justice. Samuel left it to their consciences to reproach them, for deserting him in his old age, and proceeded to instruct them in their duty.

The Israelites were now rejoicing before GOD with their king, and as Saul's first act of royal power had been blessed with success, they might think there was no harm in their having desired to have a king: Samuel therefore called to mind the various successes they had experienced

experienced under the immediate direction of the LORD ; and assured them that, if they wished for happiness, they must still place their whole dependance on their heavenly king, and then their new king might prove a blessing to them ; but to shew that the LORD was really displeased with them, a miraculous sign was given : this brought the people to a sense of their sin, and they were glad to implore Samuel to intercede for their pardon, who assured them of his willingness to instruct them in their duty, and of his earnest prayers for their welfare ; and comforted them under their present fears, in the name of the LORD, with promises, that if they would abstain from idolatry, and kept stedfast in the way of God's commandments, the LORD would still continue to bless both them and their king ; but he warned them at the same time, *that if they did wickedly, they would be consumed.*

Samuel's instructions to Saul and the Israelites are suitable to *all kings, and all people.* An observance of the rules he prescribes, will infallibly bring prosperity and happiness on any nation. The violation of them will as certainly provoke the LORD to send down His judgments. A proper consideration of the numberless national and private blessings which are bestowed by the bountiful hand of Providence, will furnish the best motive for obedience. Let us then, as Samuel advised the Israelites, "consider how great things the LORD has done for us, that we may fear Him, and serve Him in truth, with all our heart ; and never turn aside after vain things that cannot profit nor deliver."

SECTION LXXIV.

SAUL OFFERETH A SACRIFICE—SAMUEL REPROVETH HIM.

From 1 Samuel, Chap. xiii.

SAUL reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel; whereof two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Beth-el, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.

And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba; and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear.

And all Israel heard say that Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel was had in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal.

And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen and people as the sand which is on the sea-shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash eastward from Beth aven.

When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait (for the people were distressed) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits.

And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal: and the people were scattered from him.

And

And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt-offering to me, and peace-offerings. And he offered the burnt-offering.

And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt-offering, behold, Samuel came: and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.

And Samuel said. What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together to Michmash; Therefore, said I, the Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt-offering.

And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy GOD which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.

And Samuel arose and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people that were present with him, about six hundred men.

And Saul and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash.

And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned unto the way that leadeth to Ophrah, unto the land of Shual: and another company turned the way to Beth-horon: and

and another company turned to the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel : for the Philistines had said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears.

But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his ax, and his mattock.

Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads.

So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan : but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found.

And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Saul's conduct in respect to disbanding his army was both impolitic and impious, for he had received no commandment of the LORD to do so : Jonathan his son was a person of great bravery, but in smiting a garrison of the Philistines he was guilty of a very rash action : it is supposed he did it at his father's command, and that it was a breach of some treaty between Israel and the Philistines ; which so enraged the latter, that they thirsted for revenge. When the enemy had a vast army ready, Saul began to collect forces to oppose them ; but we find his troops had no heart to the combat, and expressed the utmost consternation and despair. As Samuel was absent, they knew not how to have recourse to the LORD ; and without an assurance of the Divine assistance, their spirits sunk within them.

It appears to have been a rule established by Divine authority,

authority, that the king should wait seven days without engaging in any important undertaking, till the prophet of the LORD should arrive: Samuel had publicly declared, that the condition of Saul's establishment on the throne, was, *his fearing God, and obeying his commands*; and that if he rebelled against the LORD, he should be *consumed*. Saul, regardless of this, in the first instance he had of shewing his obedience, determined to act for himself, as if the LORD was subject to his will, and he had a right to expect an answer from Him by any means he himself chose; he therefore, though he was neither priest nor prophet, presumed to offer sacrifices*, contrary to the law of Moses. By this precipitate step, Saul highly provoked God, and forfeited his right to the crown. When Samuel reproved him, Saul began to justify himself by false and mean excuses, which proved that † he knew he had behaved wrong; and his whole conduct shews, that he intended to act in an arbitrary manner, independent of God and his prophet, therefore he was *threatened* to be rejected by the LORD. Though Saul's crime may appear at first a very trifling matter, we may be certain, from the heavy displeasure of God, that it proceeded from the worst motives. He acted as an *independent Sovereign*, not as *Captain of the LORD's inheritance*.

The Philistines, in their former conquests, having captured all the smiths, and prevented their return, the Israelites were ill-furnished to contend with such mighty armies, having no weapons besides their utensils for husbandry, excepting bows and arrows, slings and stones, with which some of them were very expert.

It is supposed ‡ that there is an error in the transla-

* Numb. xviii. 7.

† Chandler's Life of King David. ‡ Essay for a new Translation,
tion,

tion, respecting the number of chariots which the Philistines are said to have had, and that instead of *thirty* thousand chariots, they had only *three* thousand.

From this part of sacred history we should learn, that it is our duty to obey all the ordinances of God, to honour his ministers, and never to invade the priestly offices.

SECTION LXXV.

SAUL'S INTERDICTION—JONATHAN'S DANGER.

From 1 Samuel, Chap. xiv.

WHILST Saul and his little army remained in a state of suspense, fearful of attacking the Philistines, yet unwilling to flee from them, his son Jonathan, who had not only a considerable share of natural courage, but great faith in God, was impatient for action : but as he had not received orders from Saul, he could not march his forces to battle ; he therefore proposed to his armour-bearer to make an experiment, by which he should discover whether the LORD would be with them or not : this was to shew themselves to the Philistines from the rock ; and if they should say, *come up to us*, he should regard it as a sign that the LORD approved his zeal, and would exert His Divine power ; which could render *one man* equal to an *host*, as *the LORD could save by many or by few*. His armour-bearer agreed to the proposal, and they received the very sign they wished for ; upon which they climbed the rock, and, confident of the aid of the LORD, they immediately attacked the Philistines ; who, seized with sudden fear, fell before them. There was at the same time an earthquake, and the Philistines, in the utmost confusion, destroyed each other, turning every man his sword against his fellow ;

fellow ; so that the care they had taken to prevent the Israelites having any swords proved ineffectual.

Saul being apprized by the watchman that there was a slaughter amongst the enemy, began numbering his troops ; when to his astonishment, none were missing but Jonathan and his armour-bearer. Saul had with him in the camp a priest named Ahiah, of the house of Eli, whom he had, as is supposed, sent for when Samuel left him, and Ahiah had brought the ark with him ; the king therefore desired the priest to enquire of God, for he found himself quite at a loss what course to take. Before the priest had done so, he heard the shouting in the camp of the enemy, and understood that the LORD fought for Israel ; upon this, the king gave immediate command for his troops to follow him, and hastened to the combat ; which he pursued with such fury, that there was a great slaughter of the enemy ; many who had deserted him, returned to their duty, and those who had hid themselves came forth to join him, *so the LORD saved Israel that day.*

Saul being apprehensive that the people, on finding plenty of provisions in the enemy's camp, would be tempted to stay and feast themselves, instead of pursuing the victory, gave a severe order, that none should touch any kind of food that day on pain of death, and bound himself with an oath to put it in execution. Jonathan and his armour-bearer were absent when this curse was denounced, and marching their army through a wood, in which there was such plenty of honey that it even dropped on the ground, Jonathan took up a little upon the end of his staff, which refreshed him exceedingly, after the great fatigue he had undergone. He was then informed of his father's oath, of which the people were so observant, that though extremely faint, not one ventured to indulge his appetite. Jonathan

than remarked how unreasonable his father's conduct was, since the troops might have extended their conquests, if their strength had been renewed by a little nourishment.

In the evening, when the restraint was taken off, the people were so eager for food, that they had not patience to stay till their meat was dressed ; but, contrary to their law, and like a set of savage barbarians, they began to devour their food whilst the blood ran. When Saul was informed of it, he commanded that they should, for the future, kill their cattle at a place appointed by him : the people immediately complied. On this occasion, Saul built an altar, that he might offer sacrifice, either by way of atonement for the people's sin, or in acknowledgment of the late victory. He then desired to renew the pursuit of the Philistines : but the priest proposed that they should first enquire of God : he accordingly did so, but received no answer. Saul, unwilling to suppose himself in any fault, immediately concluded that there was some in the camp who had incurred his curse by eating food ; he therefore made a rash vow, that the offender should be put to death, even if it were Jonathan his son. The people would make no discovery ; on which he proceeded to cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonathan, who readily confessed, that being overcome with faintness, he had tasted a little honey, not knowing of his father's interdiction. Saul, instead of expressing that grief which a discovery like this would naturally occasion in the breast of an affectionate father, and without one expression of tenderness and regret, condemned him to instant death ; saying, *God do so to me, and more also ; but thou shalt surely die, Jonathan.* The people however rescued him, for they were resolved that this valiant prince, who had been so eminently distinguished by

by the favour of the LORD, in that day's signal victory, should not be put to death for an offence which he had ignorantly committed ; not doubting but that the LORD would accept an atonement for his sin, if it were one. As for Saul, he certainly had exposed himself to the curse of God, and it afterwards fell upon him.

SECTION LXXVI.

SAMUEL SENDETH SAUL TO DESTROY THE AMALEKITES—HE SPARETH THE KING AND THE BEST OF THE SPOIL—HE IS REJECTED BY GOD FOR HIS DISOBEDIENCE.

From 1 Samuel, Chap. xv.

THEN Saul went up from following the Philistines : and the Philistines went to their own place.

So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines : and whithersoever he turned himself he vexed them.

And there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul : and when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him.

Samuel also said unto Saul, 'The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel ; now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt.

Now

Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not ; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

And Saul gathered the people together and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah.

And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley.

And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get ye down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them : for ye shewed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah, until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt.

And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them : but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king ; for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel : and he cried unto the LORD all night.

And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal.

And Samuel came to Saul ; and Saul said unto him, Blessed

Blessed be thou of the LORD : I have performed the commandment of the LORD.

And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites : for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God, and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.

And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed.

Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD? And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

But the people took of the spoil, sheep, and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.

And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams.

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected

rejected the word of the LORD, he also hath rejected thee from being king.

And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD.

And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.

And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent.

And Samuel said unto him, the LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine that is better than thou.

And also the strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man that he should repent.

Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God.

So Samuel turned again after Saul: and Saul worshipped the LORD.

Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past.

And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Amalekites were a people who originally descended from Amalek the son of Eliphaz, Esau's first-born; they had, it seems, been driven out from the land of Edom, and suddenly sprang up into a great and powerful nation. Though the true religion must have known amongst them, they gradually lost it, and became abominable idolators.

We read in a former section, that when the children of Israel were advanced a little way on their journey towards the land of Canaan, the Amalekites attacked them in their rear, without any provocation, whilst they were feeble, faint, and weary; and that this action proceeded from defiance of God, and was so heinous a sin, that the LORD *commanded Moses to record in a book, and rehearse in the ears of the people, that Joshua had defeated them by the aid of the LORD; who would have war with Amalek from generation to generation, and utterly destroy them**. The LORD knew what the Amalekites would do in future; that the whole race of them would be addicted to the same crimes, and *deserve the like punishment*; and that all the wonders he should work would have no effect on them, but that they would still continue to *defy his power, and resist his will*; and that they would be objects of Divine *justice, and not of mercy*, he therefore passed condemnation upon them in the beginning, but delayed the threatened judgment till they had committed the sins he foreknew they would be guilty of. There are several instances of the Amalekites endeavouring to defeat the Divine designs in favour of Israel; particularly in the days of Ehud, Gideon, and Jephthah; for *they feared not God, but*

* Exod. xvii. 14, 16.

their hand was lifted up against the throne (or authority) of the LORD.

The time was now arrived which the LORD had appointed for the destruction of the Amalekites, and Saul was chosen as the instrument of Divine vengeance upon them. He received particular directions from the prophet of the LORD to extirpate them entirely; and as *Captain of the LORD's inheritance*, it was his duty to pay implicit obedience to the divine command; but we find he did not, and when Samuel reproached him, he pretended that he reserved the best of the spoil out of a principle of devotion. Saul's sin was as great as witchcraft, (or endeavouring to procure the assistance of evil spirits), because it implied *disbelief, and defiance of God*. And as he had presumed to rebel against the LORD, and set the LORD's people so bad an example, he was unworthy to govern them.

Saul professed to be very penitent; but there is reason to suppose his repentance was not sincere: for he attributed what he had done to fear of the people; when it is evident, from the preceding part of his history, that he ruled them with the most arbitrary sway; and it appears, that he was more solicitous to maintain his own dignity, and to be treated with respect by Samuel, than to obtain the pardon of God: in short, we may be sure that he was not heartily sorry for his fault, and disposed to amend it, or he would not have been treated with so much rigour.

It is said that *Samuel hewed Agag in pieces BEFORE THE LORD*. This action of the prophet appears very inconsistent with the mildness of his character; in order to reconcile it, we must consider the *difference between God's people and idolators*. The former, in acknowledgment that their lives were *forfeited by their sins*, offered the sacrifices appointed by the LORD, which

were accepted, and on account of *their repentance, faith, and willingness to obey*, God was reconciled to them. The people of the idolatrous nations repeatedly committed *presumptuous* sins: so far from *wishing* to be reconciled to God, they *despised His power, resisted His will, and scorned His mercy*, and no ATONEMENT could be made for them for *want* of that *repentance and faith* which gave *efficacy* to ALL SACRIFICES; and God had an undoubted *right* to require their lives by *any means* that seemed proper to His infinite wisdom. His peculiar people, the Israelites, were appointed to *extirpate* these sinners, and whenever they *did so*, they might be said to *slay them* BEFORE THE LORD, (or, out of regard to the will of the LORD, not on their own account.) So we see that Samuel, if he had even killed Agag *with his own hands*, only did that in GILGAL which Saul ought to have done in the *field of battle*; and had he permitted Agag to live, he would have been an accomplice with Saul in his *disobedience*. Learned authors suppose, from the *evident* meaning of similar passages, that Samuel only *commanded* Agag to be slain.

We learn from Samuel's reproof to Saul, that a careful conformity to the divine commandments will recommend us more to God than any ceremonial observances; at the same time, we are not to omit the latter, for they are the appointed means for testifying our faith and obedience.

It has been repeatedly observed, that when the inspired writers make use of the expression, God *repented*, it is not to be understood as implying a change in God, but only in His dispensations; and the prophet Samuel confirms this idea; for he positively declares, that the LORD does not change His purposes like men. We are not however to infer, from the invariableness of the SUPREME BEING that prayer and repentance have no efficacy;

efficacy: on the contrary we find, from many passages of Scripture, that as it is by those we honour God, so they are the appointed means for obtaining mercy and averting evil.

SECTION LXXVII.

DAVID ANOINTED BY SAMUEL—SAUL SENDETH FOR HIM TO QUIET THE EVIL SPIRIT.

From 1 Samuel, Chap. xv, xvi.

AND Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless, Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

And the LORD said unto Samuel how long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

And Samuel said, How can I go? If Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD; and call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee.

And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Beth-lehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming and said, Comest thou peaceably? and he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

And it came to pass when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD's anointed is before him.

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him. For the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.

Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.

Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, the LORD hath not chosen these.

And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and behold he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.

And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he.

Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren, and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.

And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now an evil spirit from God troubleth thee.

Let our lord command now thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man who is a cunning player on a harp: and it shall come to pass when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.

And

And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me.

Then answered one of the servants and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him.

Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep.

And Jesse took an ass laden with bread and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul.

And David came to Saul and stood before him: and he loved him greatly, and he became his armour-bearer.

And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before thee: for he hath found favour in my sight.

And it came to pass when the evil Spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: So Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though Samuel came no more to visit Saul, yet, like a good man, he lamented to see that the king was likely to bring a curse, instead of a blessing, upon himself and his people: and he earnestly prayed to God in his behalf, and carried his grief to such a length, that God reproved him for it.

As it pleased God that David should undergo a variety of trials before he ascended the throne, it was necessary that he should be anointed privately, lest those, who were discontented with Saul's government, might make it a pretence to dethrone him; and it was

not intended that David should reign till Saul was dead; though he was from that time *Captain of the LORD's inheritance*.

Samuel, as a prophet, had a right to offer sacrifices; he therefore might conceal his principal view in going to Bethlehem, as it did not concern the public to be made acquainted with it at that time, and the declaration of it would have raised great commotions in the kingdom. The Bethlehemites were alarmed at Samuel's visit, fearing that he came to reprove them for sin, and to denounce some judgment against them,

If Samuel anointed David in the midst of his brethren, it is likely they did not rightly understand the meaning of the ceremony, but might suppose that he was appointed to the *prophetic office*; had they known that David was to reign over them, they would probably have divulged the secret, and been still more envious of him than they were.

We find David was considered as a person of little consequence by his family, for they did not send for him to the sacrifice. He was a youth of a most amiable disposition and great piety; and it is supposed that whilst he was looking after his flocks, he sang the praises of the LORD; but he could not have had a very liberal education, for the Jews in general contented themselves with instructing their children in the law of Moses: neither had he learnt the graces of conversation, by mixing with society; but as he was chosen to be the future king of Israel, the LORD sent his Spirit upon him, which immediately supplied every defect. David joyfully received this invaluable gift, and resolved to submit himself to the guidance of the LORD. He sometimes deviated from this wise resolution, which involved him in distress; but whenever he availed himself of the high privilege he enjoyed, by seeking the

the LORD with humility, and faith in his promises, he met with supernatural aid, and he was a sublime poet, a great warrior, a persuasive orator, and a prophet. As an earnest that he should be endued with strength and courage to overcome the enemies of Israel, David was enabled to defend his tender sheep and lambs from the furious ravages of a lion and a bear, and to kill them both, though he had no other weapon but his shepherd's crook.

While David in his humble station was thus favoured of the LORD, Saul on his throne was suffering all the torments of despair. The LORD had forsaken and rejected him on account of his impiety, and his mind became a prey to the blackest melancholy, and subject to violent emotions of anger and cruelty, jealousy and fear; so that at times he was transported to madness; nay, it is said *an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him*. We are told, in several parts of Scripture*, that the Devil, and the rest of the fallen angels, are ever on the watch to suggest evil thoughts, and draw men into sin unless they be watchful; and that their suggestions are always contrary to the command of GOD. But that evil spirits can do nothing without GOD's permission, though they are sometimes left at liberty to afflict those who are incorrigibly wicked; particularly, such persons as resist the HOLY SPIRIT, of which number was Saul. We read, that on his being anointed by Samuel, Saul's heart was changed, and he became another man; but we find that he soon despised the LORD, and chose to act agreeably to the dictates of his own pas-

* Matt. xiii. 19. Eph. vi. 12. James iv. 7. 1 Peter v. 8, 9. 2 Cor. xi. 3. Luke xxii. 3. John xiii. 2, 27. Acts v. 3. 2 Cor. ii. 11.

sions, instead of intreating the LORD to continue to direct him in the right way; it therefore appears a very just punishment, that he should be deprived of the gift he had rejected, which would have enabled him to overcome all base inclinations and evil suggestions, and would have restored his mind to peace and serenity.

The power of music to compose the passions is very great, and that of David must have been particularly efficacious, as we may suppose he accompanied his harp with his voice, and sang some of those sublime psalms, the bare reading of which, at this distance of time, will sooth affliction, banish despair, and animate the heart to aspire after heavenly joys: no wonder, therefore, that such Divine accents should drive away the *evil spirit*, to whom the praises of God must have been hateful: or that Saul's mind should be composed by such a remedy, especially as the LORD directed David in the application of it.

David was represented to Saul not only as a skilful musician, but as a man of valour, this being the greatest recommendation to his favour; for *when Saul saw any strong man or any valiant man, he took him unto him**. David's exploits in killing the lion and the bear had doubtless raised his fame; and being of so extraordinary a nature, they were attributed by those who knew them to the assistance of the LORD; especially, as the great endowments which David possessed could no otherwise be accounted for, than by supposing that *the LORD was with him*.

The present which Jesse sent was a token of loyalty; and perhaps it might be at David's desire, to testify that it was his wish to play allegiance to his sovereign.

* See page 334.

Saul must have felt himself greatly indebted to the kind hand that was instrumental to his relief; and to do David honour he might appoint him his armour-bearer, which was at that time a merely nominal place, as there was no war. Princes and generals in those days had a number of such persons attending on them; some bore the shield, some the target and spear, others bucklers and swords; of these armour-bearers Saul seems to have had 2000, and his son Jonathan 1000.

When the purpose which David was sent for was answered, he was glad to return to his humble station, and leave a corrupt court for that blest retreat, where, free from temptation, he could meditate on Divine subjects, and prepare his mind for the future government of the kingdom.

From the LORD's reproof to Samuel, we learn that it is wrong to grieve beyond measure for the misfortunes that fall upon wicked people. We may pray for them, and use our utmost endeavours to reclaim them; but we should acquiesce without repining, in the dispensations of Providence towards them.

This section also teaches us the necessity of guarding our minds from every sin; since our most secret thoughts are not hidden from the LORD, and He values people according to the goodness of their hearts. It likewise admonishes us not to esteem our fellow creatures merely for their beauty or outward accomplishment, or to despise any one for want of these superficial advantages.

SECTION LXXVIII.

GOLIATH THE CHAMPION OF THE PHILISTINES DEFEATH THE ARMIES OF ISRAEL—DAVID SLAYETH HIM.

From 1 Samuel, Chap. xvii.

Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which belongeth to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim.

And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines.

And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side : and there was a valley between them.

And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span.

And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail ; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass.

And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders.

And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam ; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron : and one bearing a shield went before him.

And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array ? am not I a Philistine, and you servants to Saul ? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, [then will we be your servants ; but if I prevail against

against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us.

And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day : give me a man that we may fight together.

When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Beth-lehem-Judah, whose name was Jesse, and he had eight sons ; and the man went among men for an old man in the days of Saul.

And the three eldest sons of Jesse went and followed Saul to the battle : and the names of his three sons that went to the battle, were Eliab the first born ; and next unto him, Abinadab : and the third Shammah.

And David was the youngest : and the three eldest followed Saul.

But David went and returned from Saul, to feed his father's sheep at Beth-lehem.

And the Philistine drew near morning and evening, and presented himself forty days.

And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren ; and carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge.

Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines.

And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with the keeper, and took, and went as Jesse had commanded him ; and he came to the trench as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle ; for Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army.

And David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of

of the carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren.

And as he talked with them, behold there came up the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words : and David heard them.

And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid.

And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen this man that is come up ? surely to defy Israel is he come up. And it shall be that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel.

And David spake to the men that stood by him saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel ? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God ? And the people answered him after this manner, saying, So shall it be done to the man that killeth him.

And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men ; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither ? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness ? I know thy pride and the naughtiness of thine heart, for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.

And David said, What have I now done ? is there not a cause ? And he turned from him towards another, and spake after the same manner. And the people answered him again after the former manner.

And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed them before Saul. And he sent for him.

And David said unto Saul, Let no man's heart fail because

because of him ; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

And Saul said to David, thou art not able to go against this Philistine, to fight with him ; for thou art but a youth and he a man of war from his youth.

And David said unto Saul, thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock : and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth : and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear : and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.

And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head, and he also armed him with a coat of mail.

And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go ; for he had not proved it.

And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these : for I have not proved them. And David put them off him.

And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip ; and his sling was in his hand : and he drew near to the Philistine.

And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David ; and the man that bare the shield went before him.

And when the Philistine looked about and saw David,

vid, he disdained him ; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance.

And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves ? and the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.

Then said David to the Philistine, thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield : but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the GOD of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand, and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee : and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth ; that all the earth may know that there is a GOD in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear ; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hands.

And it came to pass when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slung it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead : and he fell upon his face to the earth.

So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine and slew him ; but there was no sword in the hand of David.

Therefore David ran and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled.

And

And the men of Israel and Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines, until thou come to the valley, and to the gate of Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to Shaaraim, even unto Gath, and unto Ekron.

And the children of Israel returned from chasing the Philistines, and they spoiled their tents.

And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armour in his tent.

And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell.

And the king said, Enquire thou whose son this stripling is.

And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistines, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand.

And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse, the Beth-lehemite.

And it came to pass when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men

men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is very probable that the Philistines might have heard of the threatenings which Samuel had denounced against Saul, and that he was afflicted with an uncommon distemper, which rendered him unfit to manage a war; these circumstances encouraged them to suppose that the Israelites would be intimidated by their mighty champion Goliath, whose appearance was indeed sufficient to strike terror into those who could not with confidence depend on the assistance of the LORD: for he was near thirteen feet high, his coat of mail weighed above 189 pounds, and the weight of his spear's head was upwards of 22 pounds, so that the whole of his armour must have been exceedingly heavy. No one amongst the armies of Israel had courage to accept his challenge, not even Saul, or Jonathan his son. Saul had lost his courage by the LORD's rejecting him; and Jonathan, not feeling himself animated as on a former occasion, would not venture such a mighty stake as the freedom of Israel, trusting merely to his own personal ability: we may likewise imagine, that DIVINE PROVIDENCE had ordered all events to conspire together, that the victory should be gained by the hand of David.

How commendable was the conduct of this amiable young man! With what zeal for the honour of God did he wish to remove the disgrace that Israel lay under! with what exemplary modesty did he offer his services to Saul! with what faith and confidence in God did he face his antagonist! Let us imagine ourselves spectators of the scene: behold, a mighty GIANT, completely armed, marching with haughty strides, and breathing

breathing defiance to a whole army, who fly from before him : a blooming YOUTH, in a humble shepherd's garb, with no other weapons but a sling and a few pebbles, boldly accepts his challenge ; who would imagine it was possible for him to subdue such a formidable foe ? yet this did David effect ! but let us remember that he went against the champion of an idolatrous nation, in the name of the LORD OF HOSTS, *the God of the armies of Israel*, and full of faith and confidence that God would enable him to overcome his enemy, and we shall no longer wonder at the success of his enterprise.

From Eliab's treatment of his brother, we may understand that he was of a very ill-natured disposition, notwithstanding his outward appearance was so engaging.

It may seem strange that Saul should not know David, as he had formerly attended him in the character of a musician : the text does not say that Saul did not recollect his person, only that he was ignorant of his family and descent, which he might now wish to be particularly informed of, as he had engaged to marry his daughter to the man who should deliver Israel from the threats of the Philistines. David was at that time about 22 years old, yet he might properly be called a *youth* and a *stripling*, when compared with a *giant*.

Jonathan's behaviour to David shews that he had a liberal mind ; for instead of being envious of his fame, he regarded him with admiration and gratitude : being firmly convinced that David was particularly favoured by the LORD, he concluded that he was deserving of his esteem, and resolved, from that day, to cultivate his friendship ; therefore, he took the earliest opportunity of expressing his sentiments ; and that David might appear like a king's son, Jonathan gave him his
own

own attire and weapons. David was rejoiced to meet with such a treasure as a sincere friend, where he could the least have expected it; and he and Jonathan made a solemn promise to observe a constant intercourse of good offices. It is not at all unlikely that Jonathan supposed David would succeed to the crown, as the LORD so evidently assisted him.

From this section we learn, that personal strength and courage are as nothing, when exerted in defiance of the ALMIGHTY: and that God can enable the weak to overcome the strong, and effect His Divine purposes by the humblest instruments.

SECTION LXXIX.

SAUL ENVIETH DAVID—SEEKETH TO KILL HIM—FEARETH HIM FOR HIS GOOD SUCCESS—HE OFFERETH HIM HIS DAUGHTER FOR A SNARE.

From 1 Samuel, Chap. xviii.

AND it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music.

And the women answered one another as they played and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands; and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?

And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

And

And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house : and David played with his hand, as at other times : and there was a javelin in Saul's hand.

And Saul cast the javelin ; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice.

And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul.

Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand ; and he went out and came in before the people.

And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely : and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways ; and the LORD was with him.

Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him.

But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.

And Saul said to David, Behold, my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife : only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD's battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him.

And David said unto Saul, Who am I ? and what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king ?

But it came to pass at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife.

And

And Michal Saul's daughter loved David : and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him.

And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare unto him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son-in-law in the one of the twain.

And Saul commanded his servants, saying, Commune with David secretly, and say, Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee : now therefore be the king's son-in-law.

And Saul's servants spake those words in the ears of David. And David said, Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed ?

And the servants of Saul told him saying, On this manner spake David.

And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry, but that thou shouldst slay an hundred of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.

And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son-in-law : and the days were not expired.

Wherefore David arose, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men, that he might be the king's son-in-law : and Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife.

And Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal Saul's daughter loved him.

And Saul was yet the more afraid of David ; and Saul became David's enemy continually.

Then the princes of the Philistines went forth : and it came to pass, after they went forth, that David behaved

haved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul ; so that his name was much set by.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The defeat of the champion of the Philistines was a subject of great joy to the Israelites, and it was customary amongst them, when any signal victory was obtained, for the women to meet the victorious army, playing on cymbals, and singing songs of triumph in praise of the conqueror. On this occasion the chief honour was justly ascribed by them to David, for all the conquest gained afterwards was the consequence of his having killed Goliath. It must doubtless have been very mortifying to Saul to hear such a comparison drawn between his own exploits and those of an inexperienced young hero ; but it was an honour due to *the captain of the LORD's inheritance*, who acted under the Divine influence ; and we have reason to suppose, from David's speech to the giant, before he encountered with him, that he afterwards ascribed the glory of his victory to the power of the LORD.

Of all the passions to which the human mind is subject, there is not a more baneful one than that of envy, for at the same time that it produces malice, which seeks the destruction of others, it is an intolerable torment to the heart that indulges it. Envy is a tool which Satan employs to effect his wicked purposes of breaking the bonds of friendship, and disturbing the peace of society. This truth is strongly exemplified in the present instance ; for Saul, we are told, was actuated by an evil spirit, when he flung the javelin at David. How ungrateful was his behaviour, in endeavouring to take away the life of the kind friend, who had

so often calmed the agitation of his troubled mind ; but envious people are strangers to gratitude !

When Saul found that David was become the favourite of the people, he feared to kill him ; but as he could not bear to have a person so near him, who eclipsed his glory, he promoted David to a high post in the army, in order to place him at a distance, and prevent his making interest with the courtiers to obtain the crown : still this did not satisfy his malice, therefore he resolved to engage David in some dangerous enterprize, in hopes that it would cost him his life. Saul had never fulfilled his engagement to make him his son-in-law, neither had David aspired to the honour ; but Saul renewed the promise, thinking that David would certainly fall in battle. It is evident, that he did not mean to keep it ; for Merab, just at the time that David should have received her as his wife, was given to another. His marriage with Michal, however, instead of a snare proved a blessing to him.

We learn from this section, that those who give way to envy are led into a variety of crimes : we should therefore carefully guard our minds against this baneful passion, and endeavour to check its growth, if we find it springing up. Instead of grieving at the excellencies of another, we should strive to correct what is amiss in our own hearts, and pray for the assistance of the HOLY SPIRIT, to enable us to overcome every propensity to evil. And whilst we are free from tormenting passions, we should endeavour like David to *act wisely*, that the LORD *may be with us*, and that we may have *a good reputation in the world*.

SECTION LXXX.

DAVID FLEETH TO SAMUEL.

HAD not the LORD preserved him, David must have fallen a victim to Saul's jealousy, which now knew no bounds, for he was absolutely bent on David's destruction. Forgetful of the solemn oath he had so lately taken, the king spake to Jonathan and all his servants that they should kill David; but Jonathan, who cherished the most faithful friendship towards David, apprized him of his father's intentions, and advised him to be upon his guard; he also remonstrated with his father in David's behalf: Saul, notwithstanding, flung a javelin at David, designing to kill him, as he was playing on his harp; and on his escaping he sent people to seize him in his own house, but Michal his wife, Saul's daughter, let him down by a window, and put an image in his bed, pretending he was sick, which she shewed to the messenger as David. Whilst David's house was watched to prevent his escape, he is supposed to have made the following prayer to God*.

Deliver me from mine enemies, O my GOD; defend me from them that rise up against me.

Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men.

For lo, they lie in wait for my soul; the mighty are gathered against me: not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD.

They run and prepare themselves without my fault; awake to help me, and behold.

They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city.

But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them:

* Psalm lix.

Because of his strength will I wait upon thee : for GOD is my defence.

The GOD of mercy shall prevent me ; GOD shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies.

But I will sing of thy power : yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning : for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.

*Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing : for GOD is my defence, and the GOD of my mercy.**

David was surrounded with such difficulties, that he knew not what course to take ; he therefore fled to Samuel, in order to learn the will of GOD, who took him to the school of the prophets at Naioth, concluding that Saul would let him abide there in peace ; but no place was sacred in his sight ; he cared not for GOD, nor religious institutions, and sent messengers thither to seize David ; but, instead of executing their commission, they were actuated by a sudden holy impulse, as Saul formerly had been, and joined with the congregation in praising GOD. Saul, however, was resolved to effect his purpose, but was prevented ; being obliged, against his will, to utter the words of Divine inspiration ; and he was so overcome by the Spirit of the LORD, that he fell into a kind of trance, and having pulled off his royal robes lay on the ground all night.

It may seem strange to us to read of Saul's being at one time inspired by the LORD, and at another actuated by an EVIL SPIRIT ; but we must remember, that it was in the Lord's power to restrain the evil spirit ; and we find, that he did not constantly torment Saul, only on

* As some parts of the foregoing psalm require a particular explanation, I have omitted them, because such comments would interrupt the history ; and this rule will be observed respecting those psalms in general, that shall be occasionally introduced.

those occasions when he gave way to his passions and forgot his duty : he had long intervals of reason, during which he should have humbled himself and repented in which case the LORD would have delivered him from the power of the Devil.

David, driven from his sacred retreat, took the advantage of fleeing while Saul lay entranced ; but where could he seek for shelter from the future effects of his rage ? In this extreme perplexity, he hastened to his dear friend Jonathan, who he knew would take a tender part in his distress, and pour the balm of consolation into his afflicted mind. Jonathan was so moved with the terror which David suffered, that he promised to do whatever he should require of him, knowing that he had too much integrity to desire him to commit a sinful action ; he therefore contrived a plan in order to discover, whether the extraordinary event which had lately befallen Saul, had made any change in his sentiments towards David : and to encourage David to repose entire confidence in him, Jonathan renewed the solemn covenant he had formerly made with him.

Jonathan then desired David to conceal himself in a certain field till the morrow, promising in the meantime to endeavour to reconcile his father to him ; and, as he could not hold a public conference with David, he told him he would go into the field, as if with a design to practice shooting at a mark, and take a little lad with him ; and that if he had been successful with Saul, he would say to the lad, *the arrows are on this side of thee*, which David might consider as a token that his peace was made ; but if the contrary, he would say to the lad, *behold the arrows are beyond thee*, which David was to regard as a signal for his escape.

It was a part of the Mosaic law, to offer sacrifices, and keep religious feasts every month for two days, at

the first appearance of the new moon ; and David had a right to a seat at the royal table, as he was the king's son-in-law ; but Saul, disdaining his alliance, when enquiring why David was absent, contemptuously called him the *son of Jesse* ; and on Jonathan's offering to excuse him, Saul fell into a furious rage, treated him with the most opprobrious language, and accused him of meanness of spirit, for not destroying a man who, he said, would rob him of his birthright : Saul was so enraged, that he even flung a javelin at his son to kill him ; on which Jonathan arose from his seat, and left his father in great anger.

Jonathan seems to have understood that the LORD had appointed David to succeed to the kingdom ; and he was so perfectly convinced of David's innocence, that he resolved to plead for him, though at the hazard of his life ; for he was more concerned for his friend than for himself.

As soon as David was made acquainted by the appointed sign, with Saul's implacable disposition towards him, he came forth from his hiding place, to cast himself at the feet of his kind benefactor ; his gratitude was too great for utterance, and the reflection that he must leave this generous faithful friend, perhaps for ever, awakened such tender emotions as tears only could express. Jonathan well understood the meaning of this pathetic behaviour, and returned David's embraces with all the fervour of sympathetic friendship ; and, in order to comfort David, he reminded him of the solemn agreement they had made to be mutually true to each other's interest.

When Jonathan left him and returned back to the city, David suffered the most violent perturbations of mind ; and perhaps the severe necessity he was under of parting with his dear companion and faithful comforter,

forter, made him suppose that God had *forsaken* him ; for instead of applying to the Lord for succour, he had recourse to such stratagems as could only be suggested by despair : nay, he was even guilty of a *violation of truth*, for he went to Nob, where the Tabernacle was, and pretending that he came on hasty business from the king, he obtained from Ahimelech the high-priest, the sword of Goliath, and armed with that very weapon with which he had beheaded the mighty champion of Gath, he went to that city to seek refuge. Whether David's reason was so disturbed by his misfortunes, that he was incapable of reflection ; or whether he acted the madman through policy, as the only means of saving his life, is difficult to decide ; but he was treated as a person beside himself, and Achish, the king of Gath, refused to entertain him ; he therefore retired from thence, and having no earthly friend to flee to, he went and hid himself in a cave at Adullam, where he might be safe, at least for a time, from the persecution of Saul. It was a place fortified by nature, and so fitted for the security of persons in distress, that we are told, it has frequently given refuge to Christians, who have fled thither with their flocks and herds, when in danger from the Turks.

When David's relations heard how Saul had treated him, they had reason to fear that he would extend his malice to them also ; they therefore repaired to the cave of Adullam, in order to concert measures for their mutual security ; and many others, whom distress or oppression had driven into exile, came to join David, supposing that he would endeavour to supplant Saul ; so that he soon had 400 men under his command. Filial piety, for which David was remarkable, made him very solicitous for the safety of his parents : and he procured a place of refuge for them in the land of Moab, which

the king of that country might grant perhaps on account of Jesse's descent from Ruth, who was a Moabitess.

Saul continued to govern in a very tyrannical manner, which occasioned some of his bravest officers to revolt from him, and join themselves to David, with a view to raise him to the throne. David, however, resolved to wait the LORD's time, and not to employ the force he had collected against his sovereign, but only in defending himself against the inhabitants of the countries in which he might happen to reside. When David appeared with his little army, the news was soon brought to Saul, who immediately encamped in royal state, and calling his soldiers together, he insinuated, that Jonathan and David were confederated against him. Had the charge been true; Saul would have deserved both pity and support; but it was founded on jealousy and falsehood, for neither his son, nor David, meant to do him ill; he himself was the aggressor. Doeg the Edomite, Saul's chief herdsman, desirous of gaining the favour of the king, informed him that the high priest had given David victuals and the sword of Goliath; but he omitted to tell that Ahimelech was induced to assist David from a supposition that he came from Saul, and the king was so enraged that he sent for Ahimelech and all the priests of Nob, and commanded his servants to put them to death: but all refused excepting Doeg, who willingly executed the horrid sentence! There was great *impiety* as well as cruelty in Saul's ordering the LORD's *priests* to be slain.

Abiathar the son of Ahimelech was most probably with the Tabernacle, by which means he escaped the massacre. David now reflected on himself for his deceitful conduct, in pretending to Ahimelech that he came by commission from the king, which had occasioned

sioned this fatal calamity ; all the recompence he could make was, to promise his protection to Abiathar. The history of this event ought to caution every person to avoid *duplicity* ; for none can possibly foresee the bad consequences of which it may be productive.

The first exploit in which David employed his valiant troops, was the relief of Keilah, a city belonging to the tribe of Judah, which the Philistines, encouraged by David's disgrace, and the intestine divisions in Saul's kingdom, had besieged. David on this occasion shewed that he had all the noble generosity of a true hero ; he longed to rescue his countrymen from their triumphant foes ; but as the enterprize was important, he first enquired *the will of the LORD*, by means of Abiathar, who, with the ephod, had fled to him. The answer was favourable to his wishes ; for *the LORD said unto David, Go and smite the Philistine, and save Keilah.* David's men were fearful of engaging in so unequal a combat ; to satisfy them, therefore, he once more *enquired the will of the LORD*, and led them on to conquest. The victory was so complete, that they pursued the Philistines into their own land, and seized a great number of cattle, which afforded a seasonable supply for his army ; he then took up his residence in Keilah, which Saul being informed of, he resolved to besiege David there : but David had again recourse to Abiathar, to learn what the *LORD* required him to do in this emergency, and was warned to depart, as the men of the city, notwithstanding the deliverance he had wrought, would betray him and his followers into the hands of Saul. David, therefore, hastily assembled his troops, which were increased to 600, and retired with the utmost precipitation, without resolving whither to go, but trusting them and himself entirely to the *guidance of DIVINE PROVIDENCE.*

David's escape was a great disappointment to Saul; but he still resolved to destroy him if possible: David, on the contrary, notwithstanding his success against the Philistines, avoided all hostilities with Saul; and, instead of acting offensively against him, he submitted to *flee as a bird unto the mountains*. The place of his retreat was the wilderness of Ziph, in a wood; here he was favoured with a visit from his dear friend Jonathan, who came privately to him, and in the kindest and noblest manner encouraged him to trust in God. He reminded David, of his having been anointed *Captain of the LORD's inheritance*; declared his belief that he would certainly succeed Saul in the kingly office; and assured him, that, for his own part, he should never obstruct his accession to the throne, because he would not oppose *the will of the Most High, who setteth up one, and putteth down another*; but should think it a happiness beyond what a crown could bring, to be the first in David's affection and esteem. He likewise told David that Saul was fully convinced that the kingdom was designed of God for him, though he continued to persecute him. Jonathan and David then joined in a repetition of their former covenant, and Jonathan departed to his house, for he would not stay with David, lest it should appear like rebellion against his father; neither would he countenance Saul in his unjust proceedings against a man, of whose innocence he was so perfectly convinced.

In the midst of the dangers and trouble that surrounded him, David is supposed to have penned the following Psalm *:

O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.

* Psalm lxi.

To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

Because thy loving kindness is better than life : my lips shall praise thee.

Thus will I bless thee, while I live I will lift up my hands in thy name.

My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness ; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips :

When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches.

Because thou hast been my help ; therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

My soul followeth hard after thee ; thy right hand upholdeth me.

The Ziphites thinking to ingratiate themselves with their sovereign, informed Saul of David's retreat, and offered to deliver him into Saul's hands. Saul, with the people that were with him, immediately went in pursuit of David ; but while Saul went on one side of the mountain David went on the other. Before Saul overtook him news was brought that the Philistines had invaded Israel, and he hastened back to defend his kingdom. This was a most providential deliverance to David, who would most likely have fallen into Saul's hands in a short time. On this occasion the following psalm * is supposed to have been penned † :

Save me, O GOD, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength.

Hear my prayer, O GOD ; give ear to the words of my mouth.

* Psalm liv.

† Chandler's Life of King David.

For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul ; they have not set GOD before them.

Behold, GOD is mine helper ; the LORD is with them that uphold my soul.

He shall reward evil unto mine enemies ; cut them off in thy truth.

I will freely sacrifice unto thee : I will praise thy name, O LORD, for it is good.

For he hath delivered me out of all my trouble : and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.

It appears * probable, that David abode some time in the strong holds of En-gedi, and that he employed his troops in cultivating the country ; for we can hardly suppose that he suffered them to remain idle : besides, in his Psalms, he frequently mentions, that *the barren land became fruitful : the wilderness a standing water : that the LORD prepared them a table in the presence of their enemies. That he blessed them so that they multiplied exceedingly, and suffered not their cattle to decrease ;* from which may be inferred, that *rural occupations* filled up those spaces which would otherwise have been wasted in idleness, and that the LORD blessed the labours of their hands. It likewise appears, that David exercised his mind in the contemplation of the works of nature ; and we may suppose that he instructed his followers to admire the wisdom of GOD, in the creation and government of the world, by those charming compositions which the HOLY SPIRIT † inspired for his own comfort, and the benefit of others.

* Delany's Life of King David. † See in particular Psalm civ.

SECTION LXXXI.

DAVID IN A CAVE AT EN-GEDI SPARETH SAUL'S
LIFE.

From 1 Samuel, Chap. xxiv.

AND it came to pass when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold David is in the wilderness of En-gedi.

Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats.

And he came to the sheep-cotes by the way, where was a cave ; and Saul went in to cover his feet, and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.

And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.

And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.

So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way.

David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?

R 6.

Behold,

Behold, thine eyes have seen how that the LORD hath delivered thee to-day into mine hand in the cave : and some bade me kill thee, but mine eye spared thee : and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord ; for he is the LORD's anointed.

Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand : for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not : know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee : yet thou huntest my soul to take it.

The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee : but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked ; but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

After whom is the king of Israel come out ? after whom dost thou pursue ? after a dead dog, after a flea.

The LORD therefore be judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand,

And it came to pass when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David ? and Saul lift up his voice, and wept.

And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I ; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.

And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me : forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not.

For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away ?

away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day.

And now behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand.

Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house.

And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home: but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

And Samuel died: and all the Israelites were gathered together and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In the countries inhabited by the Israelites there were many large caves, partly natural, and partly enlarged by art, for the shelter of sheep from the heat of the sun; the cave at En-gedi was one of these. Saul being wearied with the pursuit, turned into this very cave to rest, and it is probable indulged himself with a short repose. David had now an opportunity of putting an end to his fears, and, had he followed the dictates of human policy, he certainly would have complied with his friend's advice; but he was actuated by nobler principles: trust in GOD and respect for his sovereign; under whose banner he would gladly and courageously have encountered a host of Philistine foes, but he feared to lift up his hand against the LORD's *anointed*; and rather chose to endure all the miseries of persecution and exile, than advance himself to the throne till it should please GOD to call him to it.

We find that David felt remorse for having even put an affront upon his king. How must Saul have been astonished, when he heard the voice of David, addressing him in terms of kindness as his king and father; holding in his hand such a convincing proof that he meant him no ill, but, on the contrary, was resolved not to be his own avenger. His pathetic speech was irresistible: and even Saul's hard heart was for a while softened; tears of gratitude streamed from his eyes, his lips uttered blessings on his generous adversary, and he acknowledged that David was more righteous than himself.

David, willing to give every possible proof of his integrity, took the oath which Saul required, and most religiously observed it: but, as Saul had so frequently violated his solemn engagements, David did not desire an oath in return; neither did he suppose that Saul's penitence and reconciliation would be lasting: but he had ample cause to praise the LORD for his goodness, in supporting his mind under such a conflict, which had procured him the highest gratification a generous heart can know, that of returning benefits for injuries. Having escaped * this danger, and got safely out of the cave, he composed the following psalm. †

*Be merciful unto me, O GOD, be merciful unto me,
or my soul trusteth in thee: yea, under the shadow of
thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be
overpast.*

*I will cry unto GOD most High: unto GOD that per-
formeth all things for me.*

He shall send from heaven and save me from the re-

* Chandler's Life of David. † Psalm lvii.

proach of him that would swallow me up; GOD shall send forth His mercy and His truth.

My soul is among lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.

Be thou exalted, O GOD, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth.

They have prepared a net for my steps, my soul is bowed down; they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves.

My heart is fixed, O GOD, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise.

Awake up my glory, awake psaltery and harp; I myself will awake early.

I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations.

For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.

Be thou exalted, O GOD, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth.

“Samuel* had been the judge of Israel about 40 years, and having ruled with so much integrity and justice, no wonder that his death was universally lamented. He was buried at his own house; for there were no places of public sepulture in those days: sepulchres were mostly in fields and rocks. He was attended by all Israel to his grave; and many hundred years after his remains were removed with equal solemnity from Ramah to Constantinople, by the Emperor Arcadius.

“As Saul was so tyrannical, and David in obscurity, the people were very ill-governed; so that they had

* Delany's Life of King David.

sufficient reason to lament the loss of this holy man, who had been devoted to GOD from his very birth, had made the service of the LORD, and the welfare of his people, his business and his pleasure. An enemy to avarice and ambition, Samuel had set aside his own sons, as they were unworthy, and elected two strangers in succession to the supreme command. So far was he from envying his successor in the government, that he pitied and prayed for him. It were hard to determine, which was happiest, Samuel's life or his death. He lived to the noblest purposes ; the glory of GOD, and the good of his country : and he died full of years, and universally lamented."

"Such was Samuel ! Such always was, and such always will be, in a good measure, the end of all those whose beginnings are laid in true religion ; whose duty is their delight, and whose GOD their glory."

SECTION LXXXII.

DAVID SENDETH TO NABAL FOR PROVISIONS—IS REFUSED—DAVID'S ANGER—ABIGAIL'S INTERPOSITION.

From 1 Samuel, Chap. xxv.

AND there was a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel ; and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats ; and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel.

Now the name of the man was Nabal ; and the name of his wife Abigail ; and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance ; but the man was churlish and evil in his doings ; and he was of the house of Caleb.

And David heard in the wilderness, that Nabal did shear his sheep.

And

And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast.

And now I have heard that thou hast shearers ; now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there aught missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel.

Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes ; for we come in a good day ; give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand, unto thy servants, and to thy son David.

And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased.

And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David ? and who is the son of Jesse ? there be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master.

Shall I then take my bread and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be ?

So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings.

And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword ; and David also girded on his sword ; and there went up after David about four hundred men ; and two hundred abode by the stuff.

But one of the young men told Abigail Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness

wilderness to salute our master ; and he railed on them.

But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing as long as we were conversant with them when we were in the fields.

They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.

Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do : for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household : for he is such a son of Belial that a man cannot speak to him.

Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine ; and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses.

And she said unto her servants, Go on before me : behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal.

And it was so, as she rode on an ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and behold, David and his men came down against her : and she met them.

Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him ; and he hath requited me evil for good.

So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light one man.

And when Abigail saw David, she hasted and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground ;

And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be : and let thine handmaid,

I pray

I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid.

Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal : for as his name is, so is he : Nabal is his name, and folly is with him : but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send.

Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath with-holden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand : now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal.

And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord.

I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid. For the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house : because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days.

Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul : but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God ; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling.

And it shall come to pass when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel ; that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself ; but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.

And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me : and
blessed

blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.

For in very deed, as the LORD GOD of Israel liveth which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hasted and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal, by the morning light, one man.

So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice: and have accepted thy person.

And Abigail came to Nabal, and behold he held a feast in his house like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light.

But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone.

And it came to pass about ten days after that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died.

And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed be the LORD that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil; for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. And David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife.

And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her, saying, David sent us unto thee to take thee to him to wife.

And she arose and bowed herself on her face to the earth,

earth, and said, Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.

And Abigail hasted, and arose, and rode upon an ass with five damsels of hers that went after her, and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife.

David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel : and they were also both of them his wives.

But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, which was of Gaalim.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Happy was it for David, as well as for the men in Nabal's family, that Abigail went forth to meet him : the means she made use of to appease him, shew that she was a very prudent woman ; she certainly was persuaded that the LORD had appointed David to rule over Israel, and that he was on this account, as well as for his personal merit, entitled to respect. There was an absolute necessity for her imputing Nabal's churlishness to his *folly*, in order to save his life, as no other excuse could be offered for him ; besides, we must consider that she had great reason to blame her husband for the danger to which he had exposed his family ; with the most powerful arguments, from honour and religion, she endeavoured to keep David from shedding blood, and entreated him to regard *her* as the offender, imploring his pardon, which she thought he had too much generosity and compassion to refuse. This polite and elegant address appeased his rage, and he now thought with horror on the deed he before intended to have perpetrated. From the manner in which David expressed his thankfulness to GOD for preserving him from this sin, we
may

may conclude that he would have felt great contrition if he had committed it : let us not therefore hastily accuse him of cruelty of temper, but consider his provocation. Nabal's behaviour was extremely ungrateful, insolent, and contemptuous ; and the words he made use of will appear particularly aggravating, if we consider them as addressed to a valiant general at the head of his troops, one who was a king's son-in-law, and who had been anointed *captain of the LORD's inheritance*. Surely then we must, instead of condemning, admire David's noble behaviour in conquering his passion as soon as he was reminded of his duty ; as well as his humility in acknowledging his obligation to Abigail, whom he immediately dismissed, that she might relieve the fears of her household.

We cannot wonder that David should admire the beauty, wisdom, and elegance, of Abigail, and wish to have such a companion, after she became a widow ; especially as he had no other way of shewing his gratitude but by making her his wife ; but we must regret to find that he gave into the custom of the age he lived in, of having several wives.

From this part of Sacred History several important lessons may be learnt. First, that it is very dangerous to proceed to *acts of revenge*, whilst we are under the influence of passion ; for those who do so will be hurried into sins, which may embitter the remainder of their days. It likewise teaches us, that a mild and gentle behaviour will generally subdue that anger which arises in a generous breast from a sense of injuries. David's was of this kind, though immoderate in its degree : and therefore he deserves not to be ranked with those *implacable* characters who are deaf to all the pleadings of reason and humanity ; who can, like Saul,
coolly

coolly plan the most malicious schemes, and are not to be diverted from the execution of them by any means.

From the death of Nabal we may discover, that such injustice as his is very displeasing to the LORD ; and that God will, himself, avenge the cause of the righteous. It is therefore much the best way to leave the chastisement of ingratitude to the supreme Judge, who seeth the thoughts of every heart, and can determine what the measure of guilt is, which it is impossible short-sighted mortals should be capable of doing.

SECTION LXXXIII.

DAVID FINDETH SAUL ASLEEP—TAKETH HIS SPEAR
AND CRUSE.

From 1 Samuel, Chap. xxvi.

AND the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?

Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph.

And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon, by the way. But David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness.

David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed.

And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched : and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host. And Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him.

Then

Then said David to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee.

So David and Abishai came to the people by night. And behold Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster; but Abner and the people lay round about him.

Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time.

And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD's anointed and be guiltless?

David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him: or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish.

The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed: but I pray thee take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.

So David took the spear, and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked: for they were all asleep; because a sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them.

Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of an hill, afar off, a great space being between them: and David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who art thou that criest to the king? And David said to Abner, Art

not thou a valiant man ? and who is like to thee in Israel ? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king ? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord.

This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the LORD liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master the LORD's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster.

And Saul knew David's voice, and said, Is this thy voice, my son David ? and David said, It is my voice, my lord, O king.

And he said, Wherefore doth my lord the king hear the words of his servant ? If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering : but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the LORD ; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go serve other gods.

Now therefore let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD : for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.

Then said Saul, I have sinned : return, my son David : for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day : behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.

And David answered and said, Behold the king's spear : and let one of the young men come over and fetch it.

The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness : for the LORD delivered thee into my hand to day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed.

And behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation.

Then Saul said to David, Blessed be thou, my son David : thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

When David undertook the dangerous enterprize of going into Saul's camp with only one companion, it is supposed he was prompted to it by the SPIRIT of the LORD, as in the case of his encounter with Goliath, and that he went in full confidence of Divine protection ; and it appears, that Saul and his attendants were kept in profound slumber, by the immediate interposition of God, otherwise, as they were active warriors, some of them would have been on the watch.

David had now a fresh temptation to deliver himself from Saul's persecutions, but he remained firm to his principles of loyalty, and restrained the hand of Abishai, for he had more concern for his innocence than for his safety : and as he had so lately escaped the guilt he would have incurred, if he had put Nabal's family to death, he resolved in the present instance not to be his own avenger, but gladly embraced this new opportunity of evincing his integrity. It appears that Saul and his host were soon awake after David retired ; and it is likely they were convinced that the LORD had closed their eyes, and favoured David in performing that action, which placed him in so honourable a light, and that it was useless to oppose him. Conviction of David's good intentions at the same instant rushed irresistibly

sistibly on the mind of Saul, with a consciousness of his own wickedness and folly, and subdued his rage. David had been too often deceived by Saul to trust to his fair professions, which, though they might be well meant at that time, were not likely to be lasting.

Saul's prediction of David's advancement is very remarkable, and shews that he did wilfully oppose the LORD; for he *knew* that David was appointed of God to succeed him, yet he resolved to cut him off. Had Saul acquiesced in the dispensation which his own impious behaviour brought upon him, and suffered David as *Captain of the LORD's inheritance* to have command of the armies of Israel, he might as *king* have passed the remainder of his days with comfort and honour.

Of all the circumstances of distress which David lamented, none was so severe to him as the being excluded from the congregation of Israel; for as he was driven amongst idolaters, he and his followers were continually exposed to the temptation of worshipping false gods; at least, they were frequently eye-witnesses of those profane rites, which were abominations to the LORD; and to behold divine honours paid to idols, must have given the utmost concern to those who were zealous for the true religion.

SECTION LXXXIV.

DAVID TAKES REFUGE WITH THE PHILISTINES.

WHEN Saul was gone, David began to concert measures for the future security of himself and his army; but notwithstanding the recent instances he had had of God's over-ruling providence, which preserved him from danger in the midst of Saul's camp, fear operated so violently on his mind, that, without enquiring the will of the LORD, he consulted with his friends, and, in

consequence of their advice, resolved to withdraw from the kingdom, and retire into the land of the Philistines ; by this step David exposed himself to a variety of temptations.

It seems that some revolution had happened amongst this people, for formerly there were five sovereign princes, and at this time Achish appears to have been king over all Philistia. This prince thought it would be greatly to his advantage to detach so valiant a general as a David, and his brave troops, from the interest of their own country, especially as the Philistines were then meditating an invasion on the land of Israel, supposing that he should by this mean confirm an irreconcilable hatred between David and Saul and their adherents ; so that, in all probability, Achish did not act in this matter from motives of real kindness, but policy : however, he was, notwithstanding, intitled to David's assistance on all *lawful* occasions, as he treated him and his followers with great respect, and, at David's request, gave him a city to dwell in. Whilst David abode at *Ziklag*, he made some attacks upon the nations that were devoted by God to be destroyed by the Israelites, particularly the Gazarites and Geshurites, whom as branches of the Amalekites it was his *duty* to destroy, because the LORD had said, *He would have war with Amalek from generation to generation* ; so that David, as *captain of the LORD's inheritance*, was justified in putting them all to the sword. David concealed what he had done, lest Achish should suspect that he would proceed to hostilities against his people and their allies, which might occasion his being expelled from those coasts ; and, with an equivocation ill becoming his character, he told the king of Gath, that he had fought against some of the inhabitants of Judah ; which induced Achish to place entire confidence

dence in him, from a persuasion that he was firmly attached to his interest; and knowing David's great valour, he rejoiced in having such an ally. Now was David called to a severe trial, for a war broke out with Israel, and Achish (depending on David's animosity to Saul, and those who had joined with him to drive David from his native country) proposed that he should take the command of those guards which attended his royal person; to this proposal* David replied, *Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do.*

We must not think so hardly of David, as to suppose that he really intended to fight against his own people: it is probable that he went with Achish in hopes that some opportunity might offer of preventing an engagement: or in case it was not to be avoided, that he might at least shew his gratitude to this monarch, by giving him protection, and saving the lives of some of his people. Happily for David, the Philistines were jealous of him, and insisted that Achish should send him back to Ziklag.

All things are known beforehand to the SUPREME BEING, therefore he might *permit* David to take this step, in order that he should learn what perplexities are the consequences of mistrusting GOD, and placing too great reliance on human councils. Though David consented to attend Achish, we may suppose that he gladly returned to Ziklag, for he must have been greatly distressed to know how to proceed. The king dismissed him with the highest encomiums on his merit, which proves, that David had hitherto conducted himself honourably. During his short absence a dreadful event happened: for some of the Amalekites that remained, invaded and set fire to Ziklag, and carried all the inha-

* See Chandler's Life of David.

bitants, which consisted chiefly of women and children, into captivity.

This was a most afflicting stroke to David, intended perhaps to punish him for exposing himself to the necessity of appearing willing to engage in a bad cause; for had he and his followers gone with Achish to the camp, their families and all their property would have been inevitably lost. David's soldiers were so enraged, that they were going to stone him; but he implored the assistance of the LORD, and calling to Abiathar to fetch the ephod, he had the comfort of receiving command to pursue the Amalekites, with a promise of victory. David, therefore, with his army, set out on the pursuit, and found the enemy revelling and feasting in their camp; so David smote them, and gained a complete conquest, by which he restored the captives to liberty, and recovered all their goods, with the addition of much spoil, part of which consisted of a great number of flocks and herds: these the army gratefully allotted to David for his own share. Two hundred soldiers had been obliged to stop by the way, for they were so overcome with faintness and fatigue, that they had not power to proceed; those who had taken an active part in the battle, refused to grant them any share of the prey; but David, agreeably to the rules of justice, insisted that they should have their share, as they were *willing* to have gone, though not *able*, and they had been useful in guarding the baggage.

When David came back to Ziklag, he disposed of his own portion, by sending presents to all those from whom he had formerly received favours, whilst he was driven from place to place; which proves that he had a very munificent mind.

SECTION LXXXV.

SAUL CONSULTETH A WITCH AT ENDOR — SAMUEL
APPEARETH TO HIM.

From 1 Samuel, Chap. xxviii.

Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented for him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city; and Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.

And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem; and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa.

And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled.

And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor.

And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night. And he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up whom I shall name unto thee.

And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? And Saul swore to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.

Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? and he said, Bring me up Samuel.

And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul.

And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? and the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.

And he said unto her, What form is he of? and she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself.

And Samuel said to Saul, why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed: for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.

Then said Samuel, Wherefore, then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? And the LORD hath done to him as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David.

Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day.

Moreover, the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.

Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid because of the words of Samuel:

and

and there was no strength in him ; for he had eaten no bread all the day nor all the night.

And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled, and said unto him, Behold, thine handmaid hath obeyed thy voice, and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto thy words which thou spakest unto me.

Now therefore, I pray thee, hearken thou also unto the voice of thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee ; and eat, that thou mayest have strength, when thou goest on thy way.

But he refused and said, I will not eat. But his servants, together with the woman, compelled him ; and he hearkened unto their voice. So he arose from the earth, and sat upon the bed.

And the woman had a fat calf in the house, and she hasted, and killed it, and took flour, and kneaded it, and did bake unleavened bread thereof.

And she brought it before Saul, and before his servants ; and they did eat. Then they rose up, and went away that night.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The terror which Saul suffered at the sight of the Philistine army was very natural to a guilty mind: had he kept to his duty, he would have had no cause to tremble, for in that case he might, with the utmost confidence, have enquired the will of the LORD. “ But how* could he who had murdered the priests consult the holy oracle? and after having slighted the admonitions of Samuel, how could he expect to be answered by prophets? neither could he hope for direction by

* Henry's Annotations.

a dream from God, for he had forfeited all the aids of the Holy Spirit." He had also by his cruel persecutions driven David away, and many brave officers; the flower of Saul's army had with him joined the enemy, so that his situation was truly deplorable; but he was the author of his own wretchedness; he ought therefore to have humbled himself, and implored the mercy of God; instead of doing so, Saul had recourse to an expedient which he could not be ignorant was an unlawful one; for he had in the beginning of his reign, from a full conviction that diabolical arts were abominable to the LORD, destroyed all those who were known to practise them.

Saul had lived in a continued course of presumptuous sin; he therefore deserved to be *rejected* of God, who had shewn so much forbearance towards him. His disobedience in respect to Agag and the Amalekites, made him *unfit* to be any longer *captain of the LORD's inheritance*; David had been anointed in his stead, and the promise of the kingdom was at the same time given him, for the LORD knew that Saul would not repent; but David was not permitted to *dethrone* Saul, who might have enjoyed a peaceable reign by his assistance, had he humbly submitted to the just punishment that was inflicted on him (as Moses did to his disappointment in respect to the land of Canaan, and Eli to the preference given to Samuel). But when Saul learnt that another was preferred before him, and perceived that the Spirit of the LORD was on David, from which he concluded him to be the man, he resolved to oppose the purposes of God, by putting David to death. His cruel designs proved ineffectual, and finding himself and his kingdom in the most imminent danger, his spirits sunk to the depth of despair; he was solicitous to
know

know what would really be the event of the battle, therefore made use of the usual *ceremonies* for learning *the will of the LORD* ; but as his *heart* was not *right towards God*, they were to no purpose. Saul now lamented the loss of Samuel, and formed a desperate resolution of trying whether he could bring him from the dead by magic spells ; for this purpose he went in the night to the witch of Endor.

Witches, wizards, sorcerers, &c. so frequently mentioned in scripture, were persons who pretended to hold intercourse with spirits, and by their means to foretel future events : it is supposed that they made use of a number of superstitious ceremonies, in order to engage the assistance of *evil beings* in mischievous practices and the discovery of hidden things. Superstition is very credulous ; therefore people, who had more curiosity than religion, were led to suppose, from the strange words these persons uttered, that they were really possessed of supernatural knowledge, and could converse with souls in a state of separation from the body ; but we must not believe that *evil spirits* can reveal, or any *human being* possibly discover, what it pleases *God* to conceal ; that any arts can prevail to bring spirits into this world ; or that *departed souls* can assume bodies when they please, and become visible to mortal sight : for they are no more able to come to us, than we to go to them. The *CREATOR* of all things certainly *could* clothe the soul of Samuel with a *visible form*, in order that he might repeat and confirm the sentence he had formerly been commanded to denounce against Saul, and to assure him that it was going to be put immediately into execution ; or we may suppose, with some degree of probability, that this sorceress might be *commanded* to utter these words, as Balaam was to prophesy

phesy in favour of Israel. However, as we cannot come to a certainty about it, let us read the story with humility of mind, and rest assured, that whether Samuel *appeared* or *not*, the whole transaction was ordered by the LORD, to awaken Saul to a sense of his sin, that he might spend the last hours of his life in repentance ; but though we read, that when Saul found there was no hopes of success remaining, he threw himself on the ground in agonies of distress, we do not find, that he expressed either sorrow or contrition for the crimes that had reduced him to this miserable state ; he certainly thought that Samuel had spoken to him ; we are therefore taught by his example, *that if sinners are not to be reformed by the revealed will of God declared by Moses and the prophets, neither will they be converted if one comes to them from the dead.* We should not be led from this account of Samuel to be fearful of *ghosts*, as no *spirit* can appear but by the *miraculous power of God*, which the present state of religion does not require to be exerted ; for this reason, we may be sure, that all the foolish stories of apparitions, that are told by superstitious people, have no foundation in truth, but are the product of a weak imagination ; never therefore “ let us * give way to gloomy presages and terrors of mind, nor indulge a desire to pry into futurity ; but fortify our souls against them, by securing the friendship and protection of that Being, who disposes of events and governs futurity. When we lie down to sleep, let us recommend ourselves to His care : when we awake, let us give ourselves up to His direction. Amidst all the evils that threaten us, let us look up to Him for help, and doubt not but He will either

* Spectator, Vol. i. No. 7.

avert them, or turn them to our advantage. Though we know neither the time nor manner of our death, nor what will befall us in this life, let us not be solicitous about it; because we may be sure that God knows all, for he views the *whole* of our *existence*, not only what is *passed*, but what *is to come*, and will not fail to comfort and support us on all occasions."

SECTION LXXXVI.

THE BATTLE OF GILBOA—THE DEATH OF SAUL AND JONATHAN.

From 1 Samuel, Chap. xxxi.—1 Chron. Chap. x.

Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa.

And the Philistines followed hard after Saul, and after his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, the sons of Saul.

And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was sore wounded of the archers.

Then said Saul to his armour-bearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come, and abuse me. But his armour-bearer would not; for he was sore afraid. So Saul took a sword, and fell upon it: and when his armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise on the sword and died.

So Saul died, and his three sons, and all his house died together.

And

And when all the men of Israel that were in the valley saw that they fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, then they forsook their cities, and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his sons fallen in mount Gilboa.

And when they had stripped him, they took his head and his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to carry tidings unto their idols, and to the people.

And they put his armour in the house of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon.

And when all Jabesh-gilead heard all that the Philistines had done to Saul, they arose, all the valiant men, and took away the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it;

And enquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It seems * probable, that Saul was attacked in his camp soon after he returned from Endor; and that the Philistines might be encouraged to this attempt by some secret information of Saul's having stolen out the even-

* Delany's Life of King David.

ing before ; for had he attacked the Philistines, the battle would have been fought at Shunem, where they were encamped.

The practice of fighting with bows and arrows was not at that time in general use, and those amongst the Israelites, who were expert at it, had resorted to David : so that the Philistines, who had brought archers with them, had great advantage over the Israelites, because they were not prepared for this way of fighting, and being taken by surprize, their camp must have been in great confusion. Saul's sons were very valiant, and without doubt used their utmost efforts to repel the enemy, but they were soon overpowered ; and perceiving that their father fled, might think it vain to make farther resistance ; however, they died, as many heroes have done, by the hand of their foes, and brought no imputation on their courage ; but Saul, in his last act, shewed that cowardice which generally accompanies a guilty conscience ; for finding that his sons were dead, that the Philistines were in hot pursuit, and that he could no way escape, he resolved not to fall *alive* into their hands : this circumstance shews, that he had not a religious mind ; otherwise, let his distress have been ever so great, he would not have incurred the guilt of *self-murder*. Saul slew himself to avoid being abused by the Philistines, but could not preserve his corpse from the indignities they offered to it. The men of Jabesh-gilead gratefully remembered the services he had performed for them against Nahash *, which made them hazard their lives to recover the bodies of him and his sons ; to which they paid all the honour they could, by burning spices over them, and fasting seven days till evening ; this was a short mourning, and there

* See Section 72.

does not appear to have been a general lamentation; perhaps, the disturbance of the times would not admit of it.

If * this attack of the Philistines was encouraged by the intelligence of Saul's having stolen out of the camp, then his applying to the witch of Endor was the immediate cause of his destruction, and *he died for his transgression, which he committed against the LORD, even the word of the LORD, which he kept not; and also for asking one who had a familiar spirit to enquire.*

When Saul first ascended the throne of Israel, every circumstance seemed disposed for his having a happy reign, but it proved far otherwise; his people were oppressed by his arbitrary proceedings, and he, though admired for his valour, was hated for his pride and arrogance, cut off by the LORD for disobedience to the divine commands, and tormented by an evil conscience. Thus does the LORD deal with all sinners according to their respective crimes and situations. Let us therefore resolve to follow the dictates of the Holy Spirit, which alone can govern and restrain the unruly passions of men.

SECTION LXXXVII.

AN AMALEKITE BRINGETH THE NEWS OF THE DEATH
OF SAUL AND JONATHAN TO DAVID:

DAVID'S LAMENTATION.

From 2 Samuel, Chap. i.

Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag: it came even to pass on the third day, that behold, a man

* Delany's Life of King David.

came out of the camp from Saul, with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head : and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance.

And David said unto him, From whence comest thou ? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped.

And David said unto him, How went the matter ? I pray thee, tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also.

And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead ? and the young man that told him, said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear : and lo the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him.

And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me : and I answered, Here am I.

And he said unto me, Who art thou ? and I answered him, I am an Amalekite.

He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me and slay me : for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me.

So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen : and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord.

Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them, and likewise all the men that were with him.

And they mourned and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel, because they were fallen by the sword.

And

And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence art thou? And he answered, I am the son of a stranger, an Amalekite.

And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand, to destroy the LORD's anointed? And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near and fall upon him. And he smote him that he died.

And David said unto him, Thy blood be upon thy head: for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the LORD's anointed.

And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul, and over Jonathan his son.

The beauty of Israel is slain upon the high places: how are the mighty fallen! tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon: lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.

From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places.

I am

I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan : very pleasant hast thou been unto me : thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished !

And David commanded that the children of Judah should be taught to use the bow.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is likely that David had already heard the event of the battle, but he might not have received a certain account of the manner of Saul's and Jonathan's death ; the tale which he heard from the Amalekite seems to have been invented with a view of obtaining a reward from David ; for the Scripture says, that Saul was dead before his armour-bearer killed himself. So far was David from rejoicing, that he expressed the utmost affliction, and shewed a noble resentment against the person who boasted of having slain the LORD's anointed. This man owning himself to be an Amalekite, David was fully justified in commanding him to be put to death ; and by doing so he gave a convincing proof, that he was zealous for public justice, in preference to private interest. " David's elegy is truly pathetic* ; sorrow for Saul's unhappy fate made him forget his cruelty and injustice towards him, and he considered him as a brave man, a valiant leader, a magnificent prince of God's own appointment, and the father of Jonathan, nearly allied also to himself by marriage."

From the expression that *Saul and Jonathan were lovely in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided*, we may infer, that though Jonathan, on some

* Delany's Life of David.

particular occasions, felt the effects of Saul's ungovernable temper, there was in general great harmony between them.

How tender is David's lamentation for this dear friend ! He had reason to say, that Jonathan's love to him was *wonderful* : for surely never was there such an instance of disinterested friendship !

David's behaviour on Saul's death affords an excellent lesson, for it teaches us to avoid *personal reflections* on those that have injured us, as it is possible they may have done many praiseworthy actions ; and it is ungenerous to speak ill of the dead, because they cannot vindicate their own characters.

It is painful to read of the death of that amiable man Jonathan. *Why* it pleased God to suffer him to be cut off we are not told, and therefore it is not right to indulge ourselves in fruitless enquiries. We should in such cases always call to mind, that in the *present world* we must not expect to see crimes or virtues *fully recompensed* ; for *here* the *wicked* frequently *prosper*, while *good persons* endure the *extremest affliction* ; but we may assure ourselves, that in a *future state* every one will receive the just reward of his actions ; and there might David hope to meet again the dear friend whom the fate of war had separated from him.

It must not be omitted, that the friendship of Achish towards David seems to have continued ; otherwise we may suppose, that he would have endeavoured to improve the victory he had gained over Saul, to effect the entire overthrow of Israel.

SECTION LXXXVIII.

DAVID GOETH TO HEBRON—IS MADE KING OF JUDAH
—ISH-BOSHETH MADE KING OF ISRAEL.

From 1 Chron. Chap. xii.—2 Sam. Chap. ii.

Now there came to David at Ziklag, whilst he kept himself close because of Saul the son of Kish, mighty men, helpers of the war.

They were armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in hurling stones, and shooting arrows out of a bow, and they were even of Saul's brethren of Benjamin.

And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David, into the hold to the wilderness, men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains.

And there fell some of Manasseh to David (when he came with the Philistines against Saul to battle, but they helped them not, for the lords of the Philistines, upon advisement, sent him away, saying, He will fall to his master Saul, to the jeopardy of our heads). And they helped David against the band of the rovers: for they were all mighty men of valour, and were captains in the host.

At that time, day by day, there came to David to help him, until it was a great host like the host of God.

And it came to pass after this, that David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up unto any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up, And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron.

So

So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabal's wife the Carmelitess.

And his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household; and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.

And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah; and they told David, saying, that the men of Jabesh-gilead were they that buried Saul.

And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of the LORD, that have shewed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him.

And now the LORD shew kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing.

Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them.

But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim. And he made him king over all Israel, but the house of Judah followed David.

And Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim, to Gibeon.

And Joab the son of Zeruah, and the servants of David went out, and met together by the pool of Gibeon: and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool.

And Abner said to Joab, Let the young men now arise, and play before us. And Joab said, Let them arise.

Then there arose and went over by number twelve
of

of Benjamin, which pertained to Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David.

And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and thrust his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together: wherefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which is in Gibeon.

And there was a very sore battle that day: and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.

And there were three sons of Zeruiah there, Joab, and Abishai, and Asahel: and Asahel was as light of foot as a wild roe.

And Asahel pursued after Abner, and in going he turned not to the right hand, nor to the left, from following Abner.

Then Abner looked behind him, and said, Art thou Asahel? And he answered, I am.

And Abner said to him, Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his armour. But Asahel would not turn aside from following of him.

And Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? how then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?

Howbeit he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth rib, that the spear came out behind him: and he fell down there, and died in the same place: and it came to pass, that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died, stood still.

Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah, that lieth before Giah, by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

And

And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner, and became one troop, and stood on the top of an hill.

Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end; how long shall it be then ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?

And Joab said, As God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother.

So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more.

And Abner and his men walked all that night through the plain, and passed over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahanaim.

And Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel.

But the servants of David had smitten of Benjamin and of Abner's men, so that three hundred and three-score men died.

And they took up Asahel, and buried him in the sepulchre of his father, which was in Bethlehem: and Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at the break of the day.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

David had a noble army under his command, yet he did not offer to *possess himself of the throne*, but enquired *the will of the LORD*. Hebron was situated in the midst of

of the tribe of Judah, on the top of a ridge of high mountains. It was one of the most ancient cities in the world, originally called Kirjath-Arba, the birth-place of Arba the son of Anak, from whom the gigantic race called Anakims descended. it had likewise been the residence of Abraham: it is now in the possession of the Turks, but in a very ruined state. Hebron was a very fruitful spot, and had been given to Caleb as a reward for his fidelity to God, and he assigned it to the Levites. Here David and his army could subsist with great conveniency, and it was peculiarly fitted for his reception, being the metropolis of his tribe, and the possession of those priestly families who espoused his interest, whose determination in his favour would have influence on the whole tribe. David's having been anointed by Samuel, was by this time generally known; Jacob and Moses had predicted the establishment of the sovereignty in the *tribe of JUDAH*; so that acting agreeably to Divine appointment, the men of Judah were fully justified in electing David for their king; and separating themselves from those tribes, who *opposed the LORD's will*, by setting up one of Saul's *rejected* family.

David took the earliest opportunity of shewing, by kindness to the men of Jabesh Gilead, that he did not aim at the crown from a principle of ambition or enmity to Saul.

Almer was Saul's uncle, and being a person of great spirit, he would not readily submit to let the sovereignty be lost from his family; neither was he willing to resign the command of the army: and having taken an active part with Saul, he might likewise be fearful of David's resentment.

Mahanaim, the place where Ish-bosheth made his first claim, was on the *other side* Jordan, where it was supposed David had the least influence. Abner carried him about through the camp, and gained the tribes gradually to his interest. Gibeon had formerly been the metropolis of the Gibeonites, and after Joshua's league with him, it became a Levitical city. It is supposed that Saul had dispossessed the Levites and Gibeonites by *violence*, and placed some of his own tribe in their stead. At Gibeon, it is probable, that Ish-bosheth resided during the two first years of his reign, for so long David seems to have remained quiet; each in the mean time strengthening his own interest as much as possible.

Hitherto David seems carefully to have avoided all acts of hostility, and to have determined not to *begin* them, but to wait patiently for the Divine disposal in his favour: but when he found that Abner had drawn together a number of men at Gibeon, he thought it advisable to send Joab with some forces to observe them.

One would expect from Abner's expression, *let the young men arise and play before us*, to hear of a combat, merely to shew how skilful they were in the science of defence; but it was a *challenge*, meant to prove who were the best warriors, and most deserving of *giving a PRINCE to ISRAEL*.

Asahel unfortunately singled out Abner, and pursued him *personally*; but his ambition to take his spoils proved fatal to himself. Abner seems to have had some view to a reconciliation with David, by his unwillingness to kill the brother of Joab.

It is most likely, that Joab and Abishai knew not of the

the death of Asahel when they parleyed with Abner, and agreed on a truce.

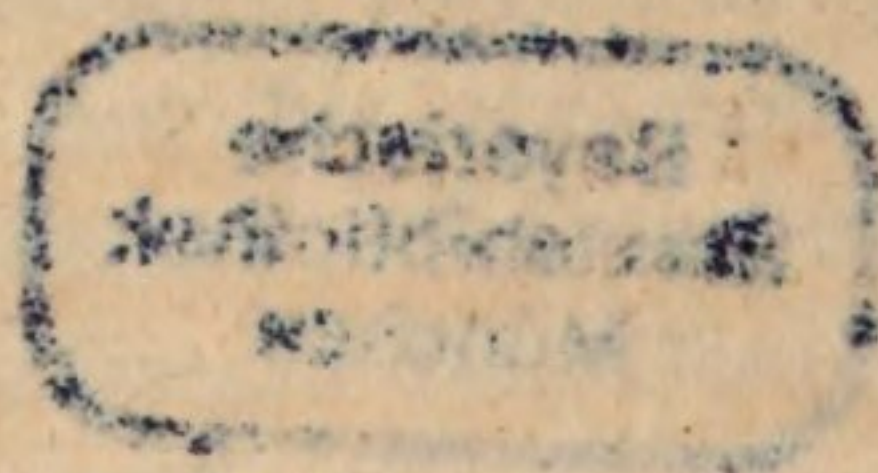
How dreadful are the effects of civil dissension, when friends and relations, espousing different parties, fall by the hands of each other!

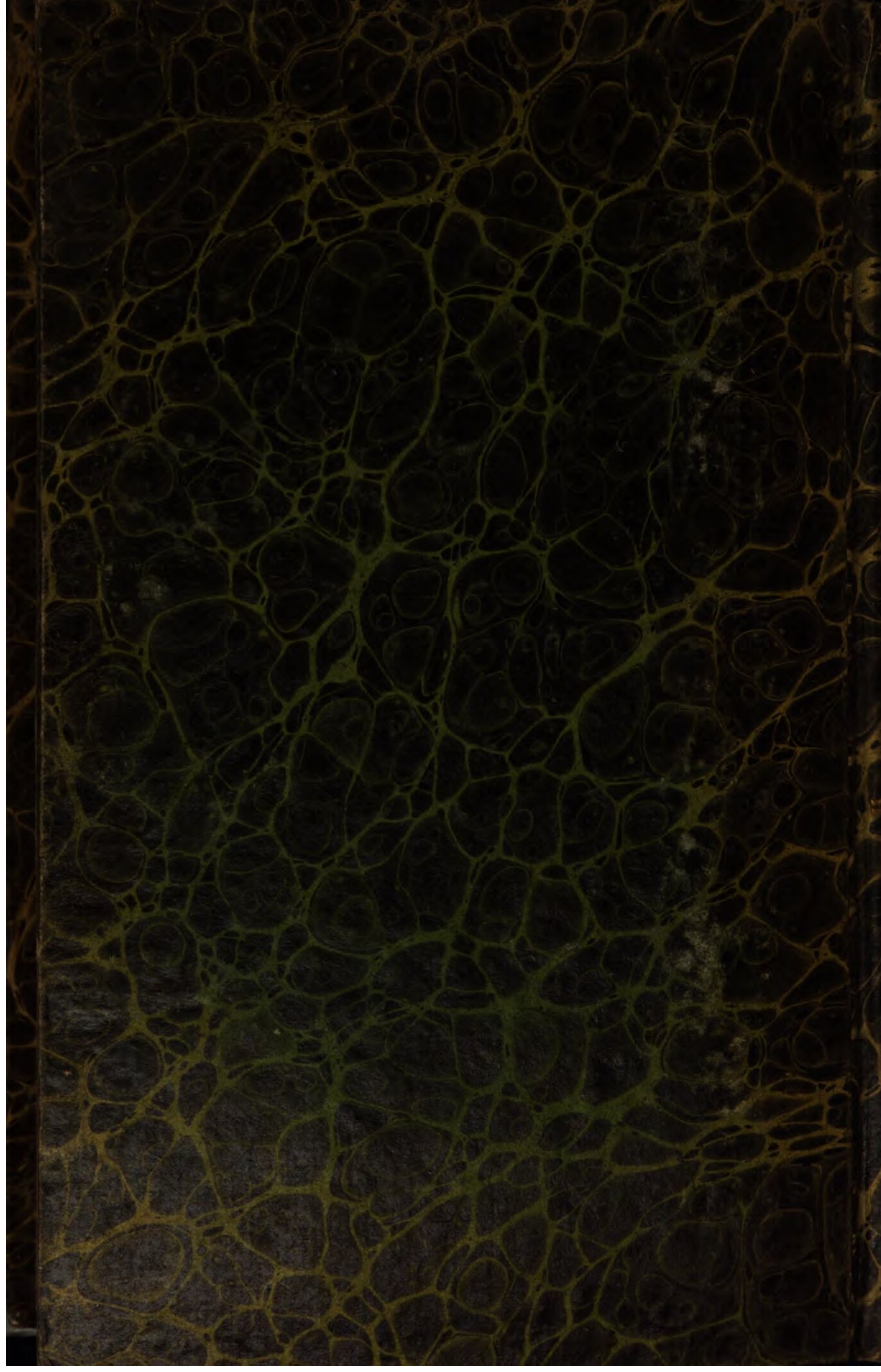
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the death of Anabel when they parted with Abner
and agreed on a truce.
How gradual are the effects of civil dissension when
friends and relatives, exposing different points of view
by the hands of each party.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.





Trimmer, Sarah, 1741-1810

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